

# Speaking Anxiety of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Education: Basis for Effective Classroom Intervention

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## Index Terms:

speaking anxiety, pre-service teachers, English language education, communicative confidence, classroom intervention

**Abstract.** This study investigated speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers in English Language Education at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao, with the goal of developing an effective classroom intervention to manage and reduce speaking anxiety. Grounded in Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, and Social Constructivist Theory, the research examined both the factors contributing to anxiety and the strategies used to address it. Employing an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, the study began with qualitative interviews of eight purposively selected participants, followed by a quantitative survey of 158 respondents. The qualitative phase identified key themes, including cognitive-performance anxiety, linguistic insecurity, social evaluative anxiety, and professional pressure. It also uncovered coping strategies such as preparation and practice, emotional regulation, resource-based learning, social support, and self-efficacy. The quantitative phase measured the extent and interrelationships of these variables, confirming that speaking anxiety is a multidimensional construct shaped by psychological, social, and contextual factors. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between contributing factors and anxiety levels. Based on integrated findings, the study proposed SPEAK-EASE, a classroom intervention framework to reduce anxiety and foster speaking confidence.

## Introduction

English speaking anxiety remains a critical barrier in ESL instruction, particularly for pre-service teachers in the Philippines, where communication skills are the most pressing gap in English proficiency (Agrupis, 2024). The ability to communicate effectively in English is not merely an academic requirement but a professional necessity for future educators who are expected to serve as models of linguistic competence in their classrooms. Despite years of formal language instruction, many pre-service teachers continue to experience significant hesitation, fear, and self-consciousness when required to speak English in academic or professional situations.

Prior studies have highlighted the multifaceted nature of speaking anxiety, identifying roots in fear of negative evaluation, low confidence, limited vocabulary, and unsupportive environments (Pahamzah, 2023; Navarro, 2025; Reyes et al., 2023; Empuerto et al., 2024). Theoretical frameworks such as Foreign Language Anxiety, Krashen's Affective Filter, Complex Dynamic Systems, and Social Constructivism emphasize the dynamic, socio-emotional dimensions of language learning anxiety. These theories collectively suggest that speaking anxiety is not a simple, unidimensional phenomenon but rather a complex interplay of cognitive, affective, social, and contextual factors that vary across individuals and situations.

However, few Philippine-based studies have examined long-term interventions or socio-cultural aspects of speaking anxiety, focusing instead on causes rather than coping strategies. This gap is particularly significant given the unique linguistic landscape of the Philippines, where English functions as an official language alongside Filipino, yet many learners do not have extensive exposure to English in their home environments. The disconnect between the expectation of English proficiency and the reality of limited practice opportunities creates a fertile ground for anxiety to develop and persist.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring both causes and coping mechanisms of speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao, with the goal of informing classroom interventions that strengthen fluency and

confidence in future educators. By understanding the specific factors that contribute to anxiety and the strategies that pre-service teachers perceive as effective in managing it, educators and program administrators can design targeted interventions that address the root causes rather than merely treating the symptoms of speaking anxiety.

### *Research Questions*

This study explored the speaking anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers in English Language Education as its main objective. Specifically, the study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to the speaking anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers in Pamantasan ng Cabuyao?
2. What are the strategies perceived to be effective by pre-service teachers in managing or reducing their speaking anxiety?
3. To what extent do the factors contribute to pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety in terms of: (3.1) cognitive interference, (3.2) social-evaluative anxiety, (3.3) linguistic insecurity, (3.4) professional preparedness and expectation, and (3.5) physiological reactivity?
4. What is the level of speaking anxiety of pre-service teachers in terms of: (4.1) cognitive anxiety, (4.2) situational anxiety, (4.3) linguistic insecurity, and (4.4) social-evaluative anxiety?
5. What is the level of perceived effective strategies to reduce speaking anxiety of pre-service teachers in terms of: (5.1) preparation and practice, (5.2) resource-based learning, (5.3) emotional regulation, (5.4) social support, and (5.5) self-efficacy?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of contributing factors and the level of speaking anxiety of pre-service teachers?
7. What effective classroom interventions can be proposed to promote communicative confidence, reduce and manage speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers?

### *Theoretical Framework*

This study is grounded in four major theoretical perspectives. Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) posits that foreign language anxiety is a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety play a crucial role in second language acquisition, with a high affective filter blocking input from reaching the language acquisition device. Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (Larsen-Freeman, 2016) views language learning as a dynamic, nonlinear process where multiple factors interact in complex ways over time. Social Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky) emphasizes the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in cognitive development, highlighting the importance of supportive learning environments.

### *Assumptions of the Study*

This study assumes that speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers arises from multiple interrelated factors, including cognitive interference, social-evaluative anxiety, linguistic insecurity, professional preparedness, and physiological reactivity. It further assumes that pre-service teachers perceive certain strategies as effective in managing their anxiety, though effectiveness may vary depending on individual and situational contexts. The study also assumes that speaking anxiety manifests in measurable forms and that there exists a significant relationship between contributing factors and anxiety levels. Finally, the study assumes that classroom interventions can be designed to enhance communicative confidence and reduce speaking anxiety.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study employed a mixed-method exploratory sequential design to investigate speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers. The design was chosen to capture the complexity of the phenomenon by first exploring participants' lived experiences qualitatively and then validating and quantifying these insights through a larger-scale survey.

In Phase 1 (Qualitative Exploration), purposive sampling was used to select eight pre-service teachers from the Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, and Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics programs. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted to elicit experiences of hesitation, fear, and self-consciousness when speaking English. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, with peer debriefing and member checking ensuring credibility. The findings from this phase informed the construction of the quantitative instrument.

In Phase 2 (Quantitative Validation) , a stratified sample of 158 pre-service teachers was surveyed using a structured questionnaire developed from Phase 1 themes and existing scales. The instrument measured contributing factors, levels of speaking anxiety, and perceived coping strategies. Reliability was established through pilot testing and Cronbach's alpha. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's Rho. Finally, integration of findings merged qualitative insights with quantitative validation.

#### *Research Environment*

The study was conducted at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao (PnC), located at Katapatan Homes, Brgy. Banay-Banay, Cabuyao City, Laguna. Pamantasan ng Cabuyao serves the tertiary educational needs of the community by offering several bachelor degree courses in Education, Business Administration, Information Technology, Nursing, Engineering, and other courses, as well as graduate school courses.

#### *Respondents of the Study*

##### Program Population

Bachelor of Elementary Education 115

Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in English 104

Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in Mathematics 48

Total 267

The sample size for the quantitative phase was determined using the Raosoft online sample size calculator with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, yielding 158 respondents.

#### *Instrumentation*

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative phase and a researcher-made questionnaire for the quantitative phase based on the results of Phase 1 interviews. The questionnaire utilized four-point Likert scales: (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree) for factors contributing to and level of speaking anxiety, and (4=Very Effective, 3=Effective, 2=Slightly Effective, 1=Not Effective) for perceived effectiveness of strategies, preventing neutral responses. The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, content validity, comprehensiveness, reliability, construct validity, and appropriateness to the research design.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Before data collection, the researcher secured approval from the Dean of the College of Education, the Vice President for Academic and Students' Services, and the Vice President for Research and Extension. In Phase 1, eight purposively selected pre-service teachers participated in semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 15 minutes each, with audio recording and informed consent obtained. Thematic analysis using Tesch's eight-step coding procedure was applied.

In Phase 2, the validated questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms with assistance from faculty supervisors. Quantitative data were encoded and analyzed using SPSS. Statistical treatments included frequency and percentage, mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient.

#### *Ethical Considerations*

The researcher obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee before conducting the research. Participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research, their right to privacy under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through unique identification codes. A notarized Non-Disclosure Agreement was executed. Digital data were stored in password-protected folders, and hard copies in locked storage rooms accessible only to the researcher and thesis adviser.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Research Question 1: Factors Contributing to Speaking Anxiety*

Eleven superordinate themes were identified from the qualitative analysis: (1) Speaking Anxiety in English Communication, (2) Multidimensional Sources of English-Speaking Anxiety, (3) Dynamic Interplay of Performance Anxiety and Emerging Self-Efficacy, (4) Observation-Triggered Performance Anxiety, (5) Multidimensional Foundations of Confidence, (6) Holistic

Self-Regulation, (7) Integrated Cognitive, Social, and Affective Regulation, (8) Integrated Emotional, Cognitive, and Behavioral Coping, (9) Integrated Mastery, Social Support, and Self-Efficacy, (10) Socially Reinforced Communication Confidence, and (11) Institutionalized Support Systems.

**Theme 1: Mental Block and Cognitive Interference.** Participants consistently reported experiencing mental blocks when required to speak English. P1 stated, "parang namemental block kasi nauuna yung iniisip mo don sa sasabihin mo" (It feels like a mental block because your thoughts come before the words you want to say). P6 similarly noted, "mabablangko na tayo sa unahan" (We might go blank once we're up front). This phenomenon, where thoughts race ahead of speech, leads to blanking out, hesitation, and difficulty expressing ideas clearly. This finding aligns with Horwitz et al. (1986), who emphasized the role of communication apprehension in language learning, and Cabansag (2020), who documented similar experiences of mental blanking among Filipino ESL learners.

**Theme 2: Fear of Negative Evaluation.** Participants revealed strong anxiety rooted in the anticipation of judgment. P1 shared, "natatakot na tayo magkamali or majudge ng mga teacher o students" (We're afraid of making mistakes or being judged by teachers or students). P7 added, "afraid that your ideas are different.. hindi ka sure kung matatranslate ng maayos" (You're not sure if they'll be translated properly). This concern is heightened for pre-service teachers because oral performance is directly tied to professional credibility. This finding is consistent with Altun (2023), who emphasized that speaking anxiety significantly undermines communication skills development, and Camilleri and Grech (2023), who found that classroom climate plays a crucial role in shaping student anxiety.

**Theme 3: Lack of Confidence in English Proficiency.** Participants expressed discomfort in using English, especially in public settings. P8 stated, "kinakabahan everytime na mag speak in English lalo na kung public sya" (I get nervous every time I speak in English, especially if it's public). P2 admitted, "hindi ako komportable magsalita ng English" (I'm not comfortable speaking in English). This lack of confidence stems from perceived inadequacy in fluency and accuracy. Giray et al. (2022) found that college students with low confidence in their English proficiency reported higher levels of language anxiety, particularly in oral communication tasks.

**Theme 4: Physical Manifestations of Anxiety.** Participants described visible physical symptoms. P4 reported "nauatal during class" (I stammer during class), while P6 noted "nagsstutter ka sa unahan" (You stutter in front). These manifestations directly interfere with oral performance and credibility during teaching demonstrations. Navarro (2025) documented that English pre-service teachers experiencing public speaking anxiety often show physical signs such as trembling, sweating, and stuttering.

**Theme 5: Lack of Preparation or Readiness.** P2 highlighted that "especially if you are not ready to your discussion or topic... during observation" intensifies anxiety. Pre-service teachers felt vulnerable when unprepared to deliver lessons in English, particularly during classroom observations where performance is closely scrutinized. Arifin et al. (2024) found that pre-service EFL teachers reported higher anxiety when they lacked preparation or rehearsal strategies.

### *Research Question 2: Coping Strategies*

Participants identified multiple strategies for managing speaking anxiety. These included content mastery and structured preparation ("inaaral ko talaga yung lesson ko"), consistent practice and language immersion ("magpractice ka more on speaking English"), observational learning and resource-based skill enhancement ("manood ng movies... learning materials sa YouTube"), emotional regulation and cognitive reframing ("tumatalon ako... kumakanta ako... iniiba ko yung isip ko"), social support and professional guidance ("may nagpupush sayo aralin yung mga ganitong bagay"), and interactive teaching strategies as distraction and engagement tools ("nag-gagames po ako... nawawala anxiety ko").

### *Research Question 3: Extent of Contributing Factors*

The quantitative results revealed that all five factors contributed to speaking anxiety at a high extent:

Factor	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Professional Preparedness & Expectation	2.97	0.52	High extent
Cognitive Interference	2.93	0.47	High extent
Linguistic Insecurity	2.85	0.54	High extent
Social-Evaluative Anxiety	2.80	0.69	High extent
Physiological Reactivity	2.56	0.61	High extent

Professional preparedness and expectation anxiety had the highest effect, indicating that pre-service teachers experience significant pressure to appear fluent, knowledgeable, and competent as part of their professional role. Speaking is thus not

merely a communication activity but a performance that includes evaluation, supporting the idea that speaking anxiety is tied to professional identity.

#### *Research Question 4: Level of Speaking Anxiety*

Dimension	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Social-Evaluative Anxiety	2.94	0.60	High level
Situational Anxiety	2.88	0.54	High level
Cognitive Anxiety	2.82	0.56	High level
Linguistic Insecurity	2.78	0.60	High level

Social-evaluative anxiety had the highest level, showing that pre-service teachers are highly affected by fear of judgment, criticism, and evaluation by others. The presence of evaluators plays a significant role in increasing speaking anxiety.

#### *Research Question 5: Level of Perceived Effective Strategies*

Strategy	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Social Support	3.76	0.38	Very high effectiveness
Self-Efficacy	3.71	0.43	Very high effectiveness
Preparation and Practice	3.68	0.44	Very high effectiveness
Resource-based Learning	3.63	0.44	Very high effectiveness
Emotional Regulation	3.62	0.44	Very high effectiveness

Social support was perceived as the most effective strategy, indicating that support from peers, instructors, critique teachers, and other people creates a supportive environment that encourages confidence. Self-efficacy, preparation and practice, resource-based learning, and emotional regulation were also rated very highly effective.

#### *Research Question 6: Relationship Between Factors and Anxiety*

Spearman's Rho correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all contributing factors and speaking anxiety ( $p < .01$ ), with correlation coefficients ranging from moderate to strong ( $r = 0.488-0.757$ ). Professional preparedness and expectation showed the strongest correlation with cognitive anxiety ( $r = 0.757$ ). These results confirm that increases in cognitive interference, linguistic insecurity, professional pressure, and physiological reactivity are associated with higher speaking anxiety. The null hypothesis was rejected for all factors.

#### *Integration of Findings*

The qualitative and quantitative findings showed strong alignment. Mental blocks identified in interviews corresponded to cognitive interference ( $M=2.93$ ). Fear of judgment corresponded to social-evaluative anxiety ( $M=2.94$ ). Professional expectations had the highest mean (2.97). Coping strategies identified qualitatively—thorough preparation, deep breathing, peer support—were all validated quantitatively with "very high effectiveness" ratings. This seamless integration confirms that speaking anxiety is multidimensional and requires comprehensive intervention approaches.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers is a multi-faceted issue characterized by interactions between emotional, cognitive, social, and professional aspects. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Speaking anxiety arises from multiple interrelated factors: cognitive interference, social-evaluative anxiety, linguistic insecurity, professional preparedness and expectations, and physiological reactivity. These factors do not act in isolation but interact dynamically.
2. Preparation and practice are perceived as the most effective strategies, followed by social support, resource-based learning, emotional regulation, and self-efficacy. Integrated approaches combining cognitive, social, and emotional supports yield stronger results.
3. High levels of speaking anxiety are present across all dimensions, with professional preparedness, social-evaluative anxiety, and linguistic insecurity exerting the strongest influence.
4. Significant positive correlations exist between contributing factors and anxiety levels, confirming the need for comprehensive interventions.
5. The SPEAK-EASE intervention provides a structured, evidence-based approach to reducing speaking anxiety and fostering communicative confidence.

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## Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

## Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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## Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.