

## Exigent Challenge: The Negative Speaking Experiences of Senior High School Students in UM Peñaplata College

Lovely C. Tabog <sup>1</sup>,

*Teacher Education, UM Peñaplata College*

Clyden D. Varquez <sup>2</sup>,

*Teacher Education, UM Peñaplata College*

Geralyn T. Familgan <sup>3</sup>,

*Teacher Education, UM Peñaplata College*

e-mail: [lovelytabog26@gmail.com](mailto:lovelytabog26@gmail.com) <sup>1</sup>

e-mail: [clydesvarquez@gmail.com](mailto:clydesvarquez@gmail.com) <sup>2</sup>

e-mail: [gerafam9@gmail.com](mailto:gerafam9@gmail.com) <sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This qualitative-phenomenological study envisioned understanding learners' negative experiences in speaking English inside the classroom at UM Peñaplata College, Island Garden City of Samal. It was emphasized in this study that learners experience emotional tensions, physiological symptoms, and mental difficulties when they speak English. Eight Grade 11 and 12 Senior High School participants in this study were involved in an In-depth Interview (IDI). Participants' negative experiences revealed six themes; inferiority complex, apprehension, indulging voluntary and involuntary movements, classroom distractions, difficulty in expressing thoughts, and teacher reproaches. From their coping mechanisms, seven themes emerged; diverting one's attention, breathing techniques, composing oneself, crying behind closed doors, eating, cursing, and talking to trusted friends. Their insights exhibited four themes; lowers confidence level, induces motivation to strive more, furnishes avenues to gain lessons, and engenders disappointments and discouragements. Results suggested that for learners to overcome their negative speaking experiences, teachers' primary role is to create an environment that is student-friendly and convenient for them to speak their thoughts.

**Key Words:** senior high school learners; qualitative-phenomenological; data triangulation method

### Introduction

Irrefutably, English was never a conducive means of expression for most learners who were not native to it. In fact, according to Lai Mei and Masoumeh (2017), speaking skills, especially fixed to English, were regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. Due to this condition, negative experiences were also common among learners throughout the speaking duration, encompassing the experiences before, during, and after speaking.

Negative speaking experiences are issues that need to be studied since it hampers learners' ability to express notions. According to Bub et al. (2018), students attested that they were anxious and self-conscious about their speaking abilities. They expressed concern about being judged by their peers and their teacher before the actual performance. However, Benoit and Boulé (2019) patronized this by stressing that resorting to smartphone apps showed promising results, with many users reporting a reduction in anxiety symptoms and an increase in self-efficacy.

Furthermore, while the said experiences served as motivation to some, others still regarded it as an impulse to drop confidence; thus, attention was addressed. In their study, Zandian and Taghinezhad (2015)



found that some students testified that their negative experiences had motivated them to work harder and improve their speaking skills. However, Fakharan et al. (2016) mentioned in their study that due to the speaking experiences, students' perceptions mostly centered on the belief that their speaking anxiety and inferiority complex were the major reasons their confidence had depleted.

Nevertheless, this study was firmly pursued by the researchers as it was observed that there was no other particular study besides this in Island Garden City of Samal. Also, the fact that there was the presence of disappointments and discouragements evident among learners in this particular situation motivated the researchers to study this one. As Walker (2017) elucidated, negative speaking experiences could be a discouraging and disappointing experiences for certain students. Following this one, the researchers were also inspired by the fact that the problem was true, probably not to all, but surely to many.

This phenomenological study aimed to discover and understand the negative experiences of students in speaking English in one of the private schools in Island Garden City of Samal. Another goal of this study was to associate those negative speaking experiences with corresponding coping mechanisms presented by the participants to help combat the ordeals of speaking. At this stage in the research, negative speaking experiences were generally defined as a phenomenon that hobbles learners' concentration to successfully do the speaking activity in an English language classroom.

In a classroom environment, it was conceived that students were given the freedom to state what is in their mind using, at least, a vernacular. However, asking them to shift from the ordinary into the complexity of English was where the problem came to arise. Deficient gaps were observed. To explore these situations, this research work sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the negative experiences of SHS students in speaking English in the classroom? (2) What are the coping mechanisms of SHS students toward those negative experiences? (3) What are the insights of SHS students about their own negative speaking experiences?

## Method

Since this study aimed to identify the negative speaking experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the SHS students regarding speaking English at UM Peñaplata College, the researchers utilized a qualitative design. The qualitative model was advantageous because it relied on data obtained by the researchers through first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant observation, recordings made in natural settings, documents, and artifacts (Yilmaz, 2013). Consequently, it was expected that the data would be primarily non-numerical and descriptive in nature.

In this study, the Phenomenological Approach was chosen as the qualitative design. This approach delves into the human experiences to elucidate the complexity of individual perception. As Neubauer and Witcop (2019) stated in their article, this approach is frequently described as studying an individual's lived experience of the world. Moreover, the research participants from Grades 11 and 12 in all strands were selected using purposive sampling under the maximum variation technique. This technique, as explained by Lambright et al. (2019), involves purposely choosing participants with a broad range of characteristics or experiences that are relevant to the research question. By doing this, researchers can gain a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon being studied by examining the similarities and differences among participants.

Since the researchers used the qualitative design, the study also incorporated one research method, the In-Depth Interview (IDI). IDI is a method that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of participants to explore their perspectives on a particular area, program, or situation. (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

The study's participants were exclusively limited to senior high school students from grades 11 and 12 in all strands who were enrolled at UM Peñaplata College and were experiencing difficulties in speaking English during conversations and classroom activities. The research participants were chosen accordingly through the use of selection criteria. Creswell (2007) defined selection criteria as the characteristics or attributes that researchers used to identify and select participants for their study. The selection criteria should align with the research questions and the research paradigm used. As the researchers applied purposive sampling under the maximum variation technique, the selection of the participants was based on



the predetermined criteria. These criteria were determined based on the age range of (1) 15-20 years old, (2) a total of 8 participants, and (3) the inclusion of grades 11 and 12 from all strands.

The first criterion for learners to qualify as participants was the age of 15-20 years old. This age group was reasonable because students were already aware of how to elicit answers and provide extended explanations. They can efficiently respond to open-ended questions, which is the best way to gather rich data accounts. According To Eccles and Roeser (2009), 15 to 20-year-old students could answer questions well and provide valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives.

The second criterion was that the number of participants should be 8. In this study, the maximum variation technique was utilized, and it was understandable that for this sampling to be justified, participants were required to be of a significant number, for instance, 8 and above. In this matter, Creswell and Poth (2019) indicated that the number of participants in a phenomenological study could range from one to 325 participants, depending on the saturation principle. To support this statement, Clark & Braun (2013) suggested that a minimum of 8 participants can justify a particular qualitative study.

Last but not least was the inclusion of Grades 11 and 12 from all strands. As noted by Nordlund (2004) in her study on "Oral Communication in English Classes at Senior High School," SHS, specifically the grades 11 and 12 students, were vital to being included in the study of speaking since it was more common for students to work in other countries after completing Senior High School. This was also confirmed by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) research, which revealed that senior high school students in the Philippines have weak English speaking and writing skills, as evidenced by their reports and written outputs (Bermudez, 2020).

The research was conducted at UM Peñaplata College campus, and the researchers chose this location because they were attending the institution and were aware of the problem they wanted to investigate. Malley and Hawkins (2018) noted that connecting with the research site is essential when selecting it. The institution is situated at Obenza St., Barangay Peñaplata, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao del Norte.

The researchers utilized the In-Depth Interview (IDI) method and therefore used the interview guide protocol as one of their research instruments. Interviews were commonly used in qualitative research, where researchers ask participants general, open-ended questions and record their responses. In order to ensure consistent transcription, audiotapes were often used (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, an interview guide protocol was used as a tool for organized data collection, as stated by Patton (2015). The researchers created structured questions to be included in the interview guide, which aided in the smooth and organized data collection flow.

In order to ensure accurate analysis of data, five processes adhered to transcription, translation, analyzation, core ideas' construction, and themes' classification. These processes were also injected to provide a clear overview of the coding and theming courses.

First, the researchers have transcribed the data in a verbatim transcript. All of the responses, including the fillers, were directly incorporated. Before the actual transcript, IDI 01 up to IDI 08 were being put as titles of each transcription. The big letter "I" served as the interviewer, while the big letter "P" represented the participant. Integration of a ruler grid was also observed for the researchers to easily trace the number of lines of the participant's responses.

Second, since the transcription process was also the same, the researchers just copied the content of the transcribed transcript into the translated transcript. In the translated transcript, the researchers transformed the actual words of the participant into English form. In this study, the translation was justified through the use of manual translation by the researchers and with the help of the computer-based translation tool, particularly the QuillBot.

Third, analyzation of the transcription and translated transcripts was recognized. Using the highlighter tool in Word, the researcher tried to analyze the answers that corresponded to the first, second, and third questions. The highlighter color used was yellow for answers corresponding to the first research

question. The second question was blue, and the last question was green. This particular color coding was emphasized both in the transcribed and translated transcripts.

Fourth, the construction of core ideas was accentuated. In this process, from the analyzed transcript, the researchers eventually proceeded to craft the core ideas of the significant responses taken from both the transcribed and translated transcripts. These core ideas were extracted from the main points of the participants' answers. Another thing about these ideas was that it was created using one sentence only with complete thought or meaning.

Fifth, the themes' classification was highlighted. In this process, the researchers opted to create themes from the core ideas crafted beforehand. These themes were all coming from those participants who answered uniformly. It was also emphasized in this study that in order for a theme to be accepted as a theme, a minimum of 3 participants should exhibit homogeneity of answers.

In the study, the researchers also utilized the data triangulation approach to analyze the participants' insights about their negative experiences with English speaking. This approach involves using two or more articles and theories to support the study's result and discussion and enhance the findings' credibility and validity (de Godoy et al., 2021). Specifically, two theories and works of literature were used to verify the results obtained from the research, and they were used in conjunction with the interviews and interview guide protocol.

Nevertheless, the researchers also incorporated narrative analysis since it focused on the participants' perception of the problem they experienced. The narrative analysis involved the researcher's revision of the stories presented by the participants, considering the context of each case and their unique struggles and experiences. (Dudovskiy, 2011). Essentially, narrative analysis was a way of reworking the primary qualitative data collected by the researcher. In this study, the researchers intentionally used this approach by manipulating the participants' statements that were unrelated to the research topic.

The researchers were accountable for creating the research questions and scheduling the data gathering. As the IDI method was employed in the activity, it was likewise the responsibility of the researchers to prepare a comprehensive data collection process that corresponded to the said method. During the interview, the researchers were also responsible for asking the questions and adhering to a research interview protocol that involved reflective responses from the participants. In order to accomplish this, the participants were given five minutes to expound on their answers concerning the questions. Jarrow's (2012) work on Productivity Time Management states that five minutes is enough for an interviewee to elaborate on each question. Furthermore, the researchers were responsible for interpreting and analyzing the gathered data.

In conducting the study, the researchers prioritized the ethical considerations and conduct of the study. This included securing voluntary participation and voluntary withdrawal of the participants. The researchers also obtained informed consent from each participant while ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality.

**Voluntary Participation.** All the participants voluntarily and genuinely took part in the study, without any form of coercion or intimidation from the researchers. Their decision to participate was based solely on their own free will and personal interest in the study. In accordance with this, all participants were provided with informed consent in which they put their signature on it, indicating their willingness to participate in the interview, while ensuring that their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research process.

**Voluntary Withdrawal.** The study's participants were given the freedom to withdraw from the research at any point without any obligation to continue. Prior to the start of the interview, the participants were duly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time. It was also made clear to them that refusing to participate would not result in any negative repercussions or consequences.

**Informed Consent.** In this study, the researchers strictly observed the practice of informed consent. They made certain that the participants willingly concurred to take part in the research without experiencing any form of intimidation. The participants were provided with ample information and clear comprehension of the proposed research as well as the possible effects of their participation. Additionally, the researchers explained the study's benefits, risks, and funding to the participants. Upon voluntarily agreeing to partake in the study, they signed the informed consent forms.

**Participants' Anonymity and Confidentiality.** In this study, the researchers demonstrated a high regard for the privacy and independence of the participants, ensuring that their identities and personal information were kept confidential and secure. The researchers took extra caution to protect the participants from any potential harm resulting from their involvement in the study, and any sensitive information provided by the participants was kept confidential. The collected data was stored in a secure and locked area and would be retained for a period of three years before being destroyed. This approach was taken to ensure that the participants' anonymity was preserved, and the data was handled with utmost discretion.

Casterlé, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier (2012) pointed out that qualitative research findings are often affected by issues that undermine their trustworthiness. To ensure the success of this study, the researchers followed the trustworthiness criteria, including dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability.

**Dependability.** Shenton (2004) claimed that meeting the dependability criterion is challenging in qualitative research because researchers must strive to make it possible for future investigators to replicate the study. In this study, dependability was ensured by guaranteeing that the data collected underwent proper analysis and followed the data collection process. All descriptions of the study were purified, and the study became logically reliable, which could benefit future researchers who rely on it.

**Credibility and Confirmability.** Korstjens (2018) stated that in qualitative research, credibility is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research, which focuses on truth value. Strategies such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation are used to ensure credibility. In this study, two experts were involved in checking the credibility of the findings. Moreover, Moser (2018) mentioned that confirmability is essential to ensure that data and interpretations are not based on the researcher's imagination but rather clearly derived from the data. This study utilized In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and narrative analysis, which are proven to be helpful research designs in a qualitative study, as stated by Novak (2016) and Dudovskiy (2011). Thus, this study met the standard of credibility and confirmability.

**Transferability.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that the definition of transferability was the degree to which the results of qualitative research could be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants. In this study, the researchers incorporated the thick description to enhance transferability. Thick description involves providing an extensive account of the participants and the research process to enable the reader to assess whether the findings could be transferable to their own setting. In this study, which focused on the negative English-speaking experiences of students, the researchers provided a rich account of descriptive data such as the research context, its setting, participants, selection criteria, data gathering procedure, and excerpts from the interview guide to enhance its transferability.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Results***

After the arduous coding process, the data were tabulated. The first tabulation contained research questions, transcription and translation of data, and initial codes to help determine possible themes. The second tabulation included the final themes and core ideas which served as the rich foreground of this chapter. Discussions were also corroborated with authors, theories, and results from the review of related literature.

The participants' experiences were fundamental in accomplishing this study's intention of determining and understanding students' coping mechanisms and insights in speaking English in a particular classroom. The data gathered from the individual in-depth interviews conducted with the participants served as the essential information that the researchers used to answer the questions in this study.

The information gathered from the one-on-one in-depth interviews with the participants served as the most critical data we used to answer the study's questions. The researchers have included the participants' profiles below to strengthen the validity of their responses:



Participant 1 was an 18-year-old male grade 12 HUMMS student at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. He lived in Island Garden City of Samal. He was the first participant who responded to our invitation to become an interviewee in this study. He says negative speaking experiences are part of a student's life. He believed that it is common among students who speak during speaking performances. He was also known in this study as IDI-01.

Participant 2 was an 18-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived at Aundanao, Island Garden City of Samal. She was the second participant who accepted the researchers' request to conduct an interview. During the interview, she revealed that although she can speak in front, she still encountered a lot of negative speaking experiences. She was otherwise known in this study as IDI-02.

Participant 3 was an 18-year-old male student in Grade 12 HUMMS of UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. He lived in Barangay San Jose, Island Garden City of Samal. During the interview, he shared that he has a lot of negative experiences in speaking. Whenever he explains, he always repeats that anxiety is always his biggest ordeal in speaking. He was known in this study as IDI-03.

Participant 4 was also an 18-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived at Peñaplata, Island Garden City of Samal. She was a shy person who explained that speaking was her greatest problem. She finds speaking complicated because she has always experienced mental blocks, stuttering, and anxiety. She was known in this study as IDI-04.

Participant 5 was a 19-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived in Island Garden City of Samal. Although she admitted that she could actually express her thoughts well, unfortunately, it is tough to compose herself whenever anxiety crumples her steadfastness. She was otherwise known in this study as IDI-05.

Participant 6 was an 18-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived in Island Garden City of Samal. She was a good speaker, given the fact that she was part of the readers at Immaculate Conception Parish Church. Despite this valuable role, she still finds herself nervous when she speaks in front of her classmates, especially when using English. She was known in this study as IDI-06.

Participant 7 was also an 18-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived at Catagman, Island Garden City of Samal. She emphasized that negative experiences she encountered commonly centered around stuttering and mental block. She was also known in this study as IDI-07.

Participant 8 was still an 18-year-old female student in grade 12 HUMMS at UM Peñaplata College Senior High School. She lived at Peñaplata, Island Garden City of Samal. She was clearly pinpointing that the negative speaking experiences that she had encountered were indeed disappointing and discouraging. She was known in this study as IDI-08.

## **Discussion**

### **A. Negative Experiences of SHS Students in Speaking English in a Classroom**

In response to the first question about students' negative experiences when speaking English in the classroom, participants shared their unpleasant encounters that happened before, during, and after speaking. Based on these negative experiences, the researchers identified six (6) major themes, which were (1) inferiority complex, (2) apprehension, (3) indulging voluntary and involuntary movements, (4) classroom distractions, (5) difficulty in expressing thoughts, and (6) reproaches from the teacher.

### **B. Coping Mechanisms of the SHS Students Toward Their Negative Speaking Experiences**

In response to the different negative speaking experiences the senior high school students encountered, these participants also specified their own coping mechanisms to address the ordeals. These coping mechanisms include the seven (7) themes such as; (1) diverting one's attention; (2) breathing techniques; (3) composing oneself; (4) crying behind closed doors; (5) eating; (6) cursing; and (7) talking to trusted friends. These themes are also assigned to each of the negative experiences revealed from the first research question.



### **C. Insights of the SHS Students Toward Their Negative Speaking Experiences**

On the third question posed regarding the insights of the learners toward their own negative speaking experiences, two types of insights appeared, which are positive and negative. Out of these two types, four (4) themes emerged, which include (1) lowers confidence level; (2) induces motivation to strive more; (3) furnishes an avenue to gain lessons; and (4) engenders disappointments and discouragements. These themes are also associated with the negative experiences revealed by the first research question.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study confirm the importance of students' ability to overcome challenges in speaking activities. Students who experience negative speaking experiences should not be discouraged but motivated to improve their speaking skills. The findings suggest that teachers and students should develop a bond where they could create a solution to students' negative speaking experiences. It is crucial for teachers to understand that their feedback is not intended to discourage students, but rather to motivate them to practice and improve their speaking skills. Teachers should explain to their students that negative feedback is just part of the learning process and that it is their way to motivate students to practice speaking.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of the students' ability to find solutions to their own problems since they are unique individuals. Teachers need to provide a supportive learning environment where students can identify their own coping mechanisms to overcome negative experiences. Teachers should also consider each student's individual differences, such as their personality and learning styles, to provide effective teaching strategies that cater to their needs.

The findings of this study have implications for both teachers and students in their classroom interactions. Teachers should create a supportive and positive learning environment that promotes students' confidence in speaking. They should also encourage students to engage in speaking activities to enhance their speaking skills. On the other hand, students should actively participate in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning. They should seek guidance and support from their teachers and peers to improve their speaking skills.

Nevertheless, this study provides valuable insights into the negative speaking experiences of students and the importance of developing effective coping mechanisms to overcome these experiences. It emphasizes the need for a supportive and positive learning environment that promotes students' confidence in speaking. This study serves as a basis for further research on the topic and can be used to develop interventions to enhance students' speaking skills and overcome their negative experiences.

Overall, the power of language is both a blessing and a curse. While it can inspire, motivate, and bring people together, it can also wound, discourage, and tear us apart. When students experience negative speaking experiences, it can have a profound and lasting impact on their confidence, self-worth, and future aspirations. However, if students learn to love speaking, eventually, they will discover a whole new world of opportunities and possibilities. They will be able to express their thoughts and ideas confidently, connect with others on a deeper level, and engage in meaningful conversations that broaden their perspectives and inspire personal and societal growth. Additionally, their improved communication skills will benefit them in their academic pursuits, career aspirations, and personal relationships, leading to a more fulfilling and successful life.

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