

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH VERBAL COMMUNICATION OF STUDENTS IN A SELECTED PRIVATE COLLEGE IN BUTUAN CITY: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the level of confidence in English verbal communication among first-year college students at Agusan Colleges, Incorporated. Anchored on Affective Filter Hypothesis, the study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to further explain the quantitative results. A total of 67 respondents participated in the quantitative phase using a researcher-made questionnaire, while eight participants from the group with the lowest mean scores were purposively selected for the qualitative phase. Descriptive statistics and inferential tests revealed that students generally demonstrated a high level of confidence in English verbal communication. However, lower confidence was observed in spontaneous speaking and in explaining academic ideas. No significant differences were found when respondents were grouped according to age, sex, and degree program. Thematic analysis of qualitative data identified key factors influencing confidence, including affective barriers, linguistic challenges, and sociocultural influences. Students also reported coping strategies such as engaging with English media and practicing speaking. Based on these findings, a structured intervention program is proposed to enhance students' speaking confidence through guided and interactive activities in a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: *English verbal communication, confidence, mixed-methods, Affective Filter Hypothesis, speaking skills.*

INTRODUCTION

English is widely recognized as the global lingua franca in international communication, education, business, and diplomacy. It serves as a common language that allows communication among people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds

(Albl-Mikasa et al., 2024), spoken by almost 1.53 billion individuals around the world (Statista, 2025).

The global spread of English has been influenced by several historical developments, particularly British colonization. As the language expanded across different regions, it gave rise to groups of primary English-speaking countries, referred to as the “inner circle” (Kachru, 2005). This includes countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Jenkins & Panero, 2025). In the “outer circle” are nations like India, Singapore, and the Philippines, among others (Kachru, 2005), where English is used following years of either British or American colonization.

After the Philippines gained independence from the United States, the use of English continued, but it was in 1987 that it became officially recognized alongside the Filipino language as an official language of instruction from elementary to college by virtue of Article XIV, Section 7 of the 1987 constitution. Today, English holds the status of being the country’s language of law, of power, of science and technology, business, media, and education (Ozaki, 2022)

The government emphasized the need to strengthen English instruction to maintain its global economic competitiveness. As a result, Executive Order No. 210 was issued in 2003. This order directed all public and private schools to use English as the main language of instruction at all levels of education. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) were in charge of putting the policy into action (E.O. No. 210, s.2003).

Many students in the Philippines, however, have trouble speaking English with confidence, even though it is widely spoken there. Briones et al. (2023) claim that Filipino students commonly encounter difficulties in verbal communication. Tolentino and Santos (2020) indicate that learners are generally intimidated when using English and prefer to speak in their mother tongue. These issues are especially relevant for first year college students in a selected college in Butuan City. Additionally, most learners in the region speak English as either their third or fourth language after Filipino, Cebuano, or their ethnic dialect (Escuadro, 2024). This reality gives hardship to students who are expected to use English as the primary medium of expression in school.

While previous studies on language learning have frequently emphasized affective barriers, including language anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and negative assessments from peers or teachers, recent studies in the Philippines have particularly examined the variables contributing to poor confidence among learners (Tolentino & Santos, 2020). Guided by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, this study identified factors that influence the confidence of first-year college students in a selected private college in Butuan City in verbal English communication. This study provided insights by analyzing factors to guide future research in enhancing students' confidence in English verbal communication in a multilingual environment.

Confidence in English verbal communication is defined as the ability to express ideas clearly and smoothly, supported by both linguistic competence and emotional readiness. Studies show that higher confidence enables students to explore new opportunities and is strongly associated with improved speaking performance (Buhari et al., 2022). Confident learners are more likely to participate in oral activities, take risks, and persist in language learning, which enhances their speaking engagement and achievement (Yousefabadi & Ghafournia, 2023; Le, 2024; Novia et al., 2023). In contrast, low confidence negatively affects performance, particularly in speaking-related tasks such as discussions and presentations, even when students perform well in other academic areas (Saidah, 2024). This concern is reflected in reports highlighting English communication as one of the weakest soft skills in the Philippines, emphasizing the need to strengthen students' communicative competence (The Philippine Star, 2025). Limited exposure to English further contributes to low confidence among students, especially at the college level, although student-centered and authentic speaking activities have been shown to improve it (Untong et al., 2023; Sunugon & Ong, 2024).

Affective and social factors play a significant role in shaping students' confidence in English verbal communication, as both linguistic and non-linguistic elements influence their ability to express themselves effectively (Ghafar, 2023). Among these, self-efficacy is a key factor that determines students' willingness to engage in speaking tasks, with higher self-efficacy leading to greater participation, risk-taking, and improved performance (Yousefabadi & Ghafournia, 2023; Hoesny et al., 2023). Conversely, low self-efficacy is associated with anxiety, avoidance of speaking activities, and reduced confidence (Nasution & Nissa, 2024; Al-Khresheh, 2024). Social influences such as gender, peer interaction, and family support also affect confidence, as encouragement from peers and family can enhance speaking ability, while lack of support or negative interactions may hinder it (Pontillas & Rodrigo, 2024; Ayu et al., 2025; Supriyanto et al., 2024). However, Arabis et al (2023) viewed that collaborative learning as beneficial to language acquisition and the development of fluency.

Language anxiety is another major barrier, characterized by fear of negative evaluation, nervousness, and avoidance of speaking situations, particularly when students are unprepared or placed under pressure (Delos Santos et al., 2025; Le, 2024). This anxiety may also manifest physically and cognitively, disrupting students' ability to think clearly and communicate effectively (Hussain et al., 2025). Furthermore, environmental factors such as classroom atmosphere, teaching practices, and availability of authentic learning materials significantly influence confidence. Supportive, low-pressure environments with constructive feedback encourage participation, while overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and highly critical or competitive settings may increase anxiety and reduce engagement (Topado, 2025; Hoang, 2022; Monib & Hadi, 2025; Asnaini et al., 2025; Almusharraf & Bailey, 2023).

Perceived competence in grammar and pronunciation significantly influences students' confidence in English verbal communication, as it reflects how learners evaluate their own ability to express ideas effectively. Even when students possess adequate

knowledge, negative self-perception can increase anxiety and reduce their willingness to speak. Studies show that many learners believe grammar plays an important role in improving fluency and confidence, although some also view it as a source of pressure, particularly when accuracy is emphasized (Aulia et al., 2025; Normawati, 2023). Difficulties in grammar and pronunciation, along with fear of making mistakes, often lead to hesitation and reduced participation in speaking activities (Said & Omar, 2023; Giray et al., 2022; Kalhor et al., 2025).

In addition, perceptions of accented English further affect students' confidence. Many learners view American and British accents as the "standard" Cennetkuşu (2022). This perception may create feelings of inadequacy among those with local or regional accents, leading to reluctance in speaking due to fear of judgment (Asnaini et al., 2025). While some students prioritize native-like pronunciation, others value intelligibility over accent, highlighting diverse perspectives on English use (Zeng et al., 2022; Al Tale, 2022). In the Philippine context, studies reveal that certain regional accents are viewed less favorably, contributing to insecurity among students from non-Tagalog or provincial backgrounds (Castro et al., 2023; Quinto et al., 2024). Despite recognition that linguistic diversity should be valued, many learners still internalize "standard" norms, which can negatively impact their confidence (Malon, 2022).

Overall, the literature suggests that confidence in English communication is shaped not only by linguistic competence but also by students' perceptions of correctness and sociocultural influences. In multilingual contexts like Mindanao, these factors, combined with limited research in regional settings such as Butuan City, highlight the need to better understand how perceptions of grammar, pronunciation, and accent influence students' willingness to communicate.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model. This hypothesis was formulated in 1982, together with four other theories (Krashen, 1982). Krashen's Monitor Model served as his contribution to Second Language Acquisition Theory alongside the theories of Vygotsky, Chomsky, and B.F. Skinner.

While Krashen proposed different theories in second language acquisition. The researcher believed that the Affective Filter Hypothesis best fit in this study. This hypothesis suggested that there are affective factors that affect second language acquisition. In this theory, influences such as motivation, anxiety, and confidence are believed to be crucial in second language acquisition. These factors serve as a psychological filter that can either promote or impede the acquisition of a new language (Krashen, 1982).

Furthermore, this theory believes that when affective filter is low, the students are calm, confident, and more eager to learn. This helps students understand and use the second language with ease. On the contrary, when they are scared, anxious, or unsure

of themselves, the affective filter is heightened. This stronger filter may make it harder for students to learn and process language input (Krashen, 1982).

In this study, the Affective Filter Hypothesis served as a basis for understanding the impact of students' confidence in English verbal communication and how their emotions and perception affect their performance. This belief also explains how learners' emotions can affect their readiness to use English in various contexts. Asnaini (2025) found out in his study that students in an Indonesian university are proficient in speaking English but hesitate to speak. These are due to fear of making mistakes and fear of negative feedback due to their accent. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) added that language anxiety substantially influences students' readiness to communicate. The fear of making mistakes and receiving negative feedback frequently deters learners from speaking.

Furthermore, Krashen believed that language acquisition is not solely intellectual but is also significantly shaped by the learner's emotional and social contexts. Studies such as those of Nasution & Nissa (2024) and Yousefabadi & Ghafournia (2023) supported it, emphasizing the importance of emotional readiness and self-efficacy. They also added that supportive classroom environment may also enhance students' oral communication performance.

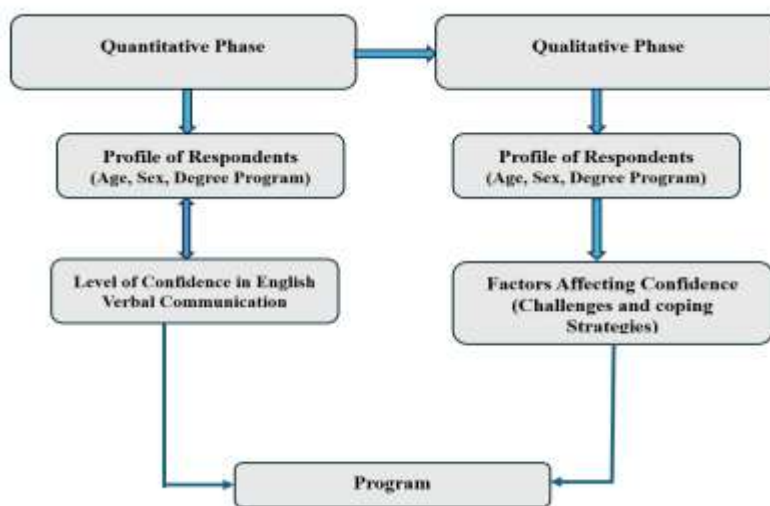
Local studies also support Krashen's theory, such as that of Delos Santos et al. (2025). Their study suggests that anxiety raises the affective filter and blocks language input. High affective filter may hinder second language acquisition. Libratar et al. (2025) added that emotional readiness such as low anxiety and high confidence helps enhance language acquisition. While Sunugon and Ong (2024) pointed out that social interaction and supportive learning environments are vital in lowering the affective filter. These practices include positive feedback, acceptance of local English varieties, and encouragement from teachers. Krashen's model shows that students' sense of security and confidence build the basic components of communicative competence.

Building upon these practical implications, the Affective Filter Hypothesis provides researchers with a meaningful lens for exploring students' confidence in oral communication in English. The present study has been able to find factors that influence confidence and come up with solutions for boosting the confidence of first-year students in a selected private college in Butuan City.

Conceptual Framework

The framework below serves as the conceptual framework of the study. This will assess the level of confidence in English verbal communication among first-year college students at Agusan Colleges Incorporated.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study



This conceptual framework is grounded in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that affective factors such as confidence, motivation, and anxiety influence language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). By using Krashen's theoretical ideas in practice, the study explored factors affecting students' confidence in English verbal communication.

The study employed mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It demonstrates the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods and provides recommendations for strategies that may enhance students' confidence in English verbal communication.

This process began with selecting participants from first-year college students from Agusan Colleges. These students were intended to be chosen using purposive sampling, as it allows the researcher to set the population of participants who are readily accessible for the study.

Following the selection of participants, a researcher-made survey was administered to the students, serving as the quantitative phase of the study. The questionnaire consists of 25 survey questions to identify students' perception of their confidence in English verbal communication. These questions are grounded in the Affective Filter hypothesis of Krashen (1982) and adapted and inspired by various studies, such as those of Untong (2023), which investigate the level of pronunciation and linguistic confidence, Hoesny's (2023) Speaking Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and Horwitz, Horwitz & Cole (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale.

The data were evaluated to determine the level of English verbal confidence of the participants. The evaluation involved calculating the overall confidence scores of the students. Also, the study measured the confidence level of students according to their

profile variable. The group with the lowest mean score was selected for further analysis, as they demonstrated lower confidence compared to the other groups.

During the qualitative phase, eight participants from the group who got the lowest mean score were invited to engage in a focus group discussion. This is being done to give more information about the survey results and identify themes on the factors that affect the low confidence of the students. Challenges in English verbal communication and coping strategies were also identified in this study.

Finally, themes are identified using Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, the researcher proposed an intervention program aimed at improving first-year college students' confidence in English verbal communication.

Research Questions

This study determined the level of confidence in English verbal communication among first-year college students at a private college in Butuan City. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in quantitative study with respect to:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Sex
 - 1.3 Degree Program
2. What is the level of confidence in English verbal communication of first-year college students?
3. Is there a significant difference on the level of confidence in English verbal communication of first-year college students when grouped according to profile?
4. What is the profile of the respondents in qualitative study with respect to:
 - 4.1 Age
 - 4.2 Sex
 - 4.3 Degree Program
5. What factors affect the level of confidence in English verbal communication among first-year college students?
 - 5.1 Challenges in English Verbal Communication
 - 5.2 Coping Strategies
6. What program can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference with the students' level of confidence in English verbal communication when they are grouped according to their profile

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

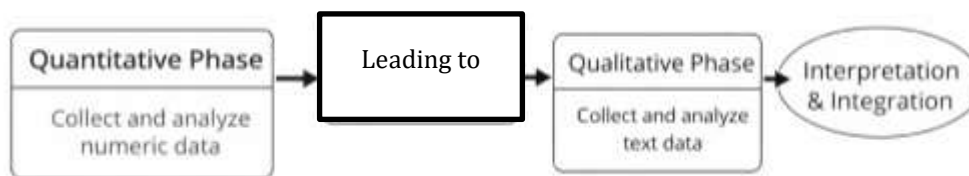
This scope of the study includes first-year college students from Agusan Colleges Incorporated in Butuan City, who were enrolled for the Academic Year 2025–2026. It examined students' self-reported confidence in English verbal communication.

Additionally, the study is limited to one college institution in Butuan City, and it does not assess actual proficiency in English verbal communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed mixed-method study particularly, explanatory sequential design. This approach allows one method to validate and enhance the findings of the other, offering deeper insights into the research phenomenon. The explanatory sequential design begins with quantitative data collection, followed by qualitative analysis to refine and clarify the initial results, as outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018).

Figure 2. Explanatory sequential mixed methods design.



Locale of Study

This study was conducted at Agusan Colleges, Incorporated (ACI), a private institution located in Butuan City and established in 1951. The institution offers programs across basic education, college, and graduate studies.

At the college level, ACI provides various degree programs, including Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information Systems, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Elementary Education, and Bachelor of Secondary Education.

Participants

The study involved 67 first-year college students enrolled at Agusan Colleges Incorporated for the academic year 2025–2026. Purposive sampling was used for participant selection, focusing on students who met specific criteria: being first-year students, officially enrolled in the second semester, and willing to participate.

Qualitative Study

In the qualitative phase of the study, purposive sampling was utilized to select 8 participants. The participants, chosen from the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) program, included 6 females and 2 males who were willing to participate in a focus group discussion (FGD). The selection criteria required respondents to have participated in the quantitative phase, belong to the BSBA group with the lowest mean confidence score, and agree to join the discussion.

Instrument of the Study

The study employed a researcher-made questionnaire for the quantitative phase and a semi-structured focus group discussion (FGD) guide for the qualitative phase, as noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Expertise from three validators confirmed the validity of the instruments, ensuring alignment with research objectives. Following expert review, a pilot test assessed the instruments' reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. The quantitative questionnaire, with 25 Likert scale items, was informed by existing validated instruments and Krashen's (1982) factors of motivation, confidence, and anxiety affecting second language acquisition, facilitating an evaluation of students' confidence in English verbal communication.

Scale	Description	Interpretation
5	Strongly Agree	Very High Confidence
4	Agree	High Confidence
3	Neutral	Moderate Confidence
2	Disagree	Low Confidence
1	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Confidence

A semi-structured focus group discussion questionnaire was used as the main tool for the qualitative phase. This allows the researcher to gather detailed insights from participants. The guide featured open-ended questions focused on students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in speaking English confidently, as well as the factors influencing their confidence and coping strategies.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure started with the researcher securing approval from the school president and validating the questionnaire's content with expert feedback. Following this, the Google Form survey was distributed to students, who were informed about the study's purpose and confidentiality. Upon completion, descriptive statistics and inferential analyses, such as t-tests and one-way ANOVA. These tools assessed students' confidence levels in English verbal communication. Then, students from group who got the lowest mean score in English verbal confidence were invited to a focus group discussion. The qualitative data were coded for anonymity and analyzed thematically to identify factors influencing communication confidence and coping strategies. The findings proposed recommendations to enhance oral language skills for first-year students at Agusan Colleges Incorporated.

Data Analysis

The research focused on students' confidence in English verbal communication through a two-phase approach: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative phase utilized statistical tools, such as frequency distribution, weighted mean, T-test and ANOVA, to analyze demographic profiles and confidence levels among respondents. The qualitative phase employed thematic analysis to explore students' experiences, coping strategies, and underlying factors affecting their confidence. This involved transcribing focus group discussions, coding data, and identifying key themes that reflect students' motivations and challenges. The study concluded with proposed interventions to enhance students' communicative skills.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards, emphasizing respect, truth, and confidentiality to protect participants' rights and welfare. Participation was voluntary, with respondents informed of their rights and able to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained prior to the qualitative phase, ensuring participants understood the study's purpose and procedures. Data were used solely for research purposes, kept anonymous, and accessible only to the researcher and thesis adviser.

The researcher also utilized AI for academic writing support, ensuring adherence to ethical practices while maintaining accountability for the research's content and integrity.

RESULTS

Table 1.1 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17-20 years old	56	83.6
21-24 years old	7	10.4
Above 24 years old	4	6.0
Total	67	100.0

Table 1.2 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	61	91.0
Male	6	9.0
Total	67	100.0

Table 1.3 Profile of the Respondents in Terms Degree Program

Degree Program	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor of Elementary Education	7	10.4
Bachelor of Secondary Education	41	61.2

Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information System	9	13.4
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	10	14.9
Total	67	100.0

Table 2 Level of Confidence in English Verbal Communication of First Year Students

Statements	WM	VI
1. I believe I can express my thoughts clearly in English.	3.15	MC
2. I am confident answering questions in English during class discussions.	3.06	MC
3. I can speak English spontaneously even without much preparation.	2.81	MC
4. I can explain academic ideas in English with ease.	2.82	MC
5. I trust my ability to speak English even when I make minor mistakes.	3.39	MC
6. I feel comfortable when speaking English in front of others.	2.94	MC
7. I do not feel nervous when classmates listen to me speak English.	3.12	MC
8. I can still speak English even when I am worried about grammar errors.	3.39	MC
9. I am not easily discouraged when my teacher corrects my English.	3.73	HC
10. I feel less anxious when I use English in informal conversations.	3.15	MC
11. I am motivated to improve my English speaking skills.	4.25	VHC
12. I actively participate in English class discussions.	3.69	HC
13. I look for opportunities to speak English both inside and outside the classroom.	3.51	HC
14. I enjoy speaking English with teachers and classmates.	3.33	MC
15. I am eager to practice English because I know it will benefit my future career.	4.28	VHC
16. I can pronounce English words clearly and understandably.	3.36	MC
17. I can use appropriate vocabulary when expressing my ideas in English.	3.24	MC
18. I can construct grammatically correct sentences during oral communication.	3.03	MC
19. I can adjust my speaking style depending on the situation or audience.	3.28	MC
20. I can sustain a short conversation in English without switching to another language.	3.24	MC
21. I feel accepted and supported by my classmates when speaking English.	3.49	HC
22. I am not afraid of being judged for my accent or pronunciation.	3.21	MC
23. I believe that making mistakes in English is a normal part of learning.	4.31	VHC
24. I feel encouraged when my teacher gives positive feedback on my spoken English.	4.00	HC

25. I enjoy group activities that require speaking English.	3.64	HC
Composite Mean	3.42	HC

Legend: 5(4.21-5.00) - Very High Confidence (VHC), 4(3.41-4.4.20) – High Confidence (HC), 3(2.61-3.40)- Moderate Confidence (MC), 2(1.81-2.60)- Low Confidence (LC), 1(1.00-1.80)-Very Low confidence (VLC)

Table 3 Difference on the Level of Confidence in English Verbal Communication of First-Year College Students When Grouped According to Profile

Profile	Mean	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age					
17-20 years old	3.46	ANOVA Value = 1.154	0.322	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
21-24 years old	3.17				
Above 24 years old	3.25				
Sex					
Female	3.43	T-Test Value = 0.535	0.595	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Male	3.31				
Degree Program					
Bachelor of Elementary Education	3.51	ANOVA Value = 1.180	0.325	Do not Reject the Hypothesis	Not Significant
Bachelor of Secondary Education	3.46				
Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information System	3.45				
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	3.13				

Note: p-value $\leq$ 0.05 – significant, p-value $>$ 0.05 – not significant

Table 4.1 Profile of the Qualitative Respondents in Terms of Age

Age	No of Participants	Percentage
17-20 years old	7	87.5
21-24 years old	0	0
Above 24 years old	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

Table 4.2 Profile of the Qualitative Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	6	75
Male	2	25
Total	8	100.0

Table 4.3 Profile of the Qualitative Respondents in Terms of Degree Program

Degree Program	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor of Elementary Education	0	0
Bachelor of Secondary Education	0	0
Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information System	0	0
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	8	100
Total	8	100.0

Table 4.4 Results in Confidence According to Degree Program

Degree Program	Mean Score
Bachelor of Elementary Education	3.51
Bachelor of Secondary Education	3.46
Bachelor of Science in Accounting Information System	3.45
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	3.13

Table 5.1 Themes and Subthemes on Challenges in Confidence in English Verbal Communication

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Affective Barriers to English Communication	1.1 Fear and nervousness when speaking
	1.2 Mental blocks and loss of ideas during speaking
	1.3 Pressure from impromptu and graded tasks
	1.4 Internalized self-doubt and low self-confidence
Theme 2: Perceived Linguistic Challenges	2.1 Fear of grammatical errors
	2.2 Pronunciation and accent difficulties
	2.3 Lack of fluency despite understanding English
Theme 3: Sociocultural and Environmental Influences	3.1 Fear of judgment and ridicule
	3.2 Teacher practices and classroom demand
	3.3 Peer and family influence
	3.4 Safe vs. unsafe communication spaces

Table 5.2 Themes and Subtheme on Coping Strategies in Confidence in English Verbal Communication

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Coping Mechanism	1.1 Coping mechanisms and strategies

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented in two parts: the quantitative results and the qualitative results.

Table 1.1 indicates that 83.6% of respondents are aged 17 to 20, reflecting the typical age group of first-year college students, with few older students. The 2024 FLEMMS report highlights that 90% of Filipinos aged five and up are basic literate, but only 70.8% are functionally literate, suggesting a significant portion struggles with comprehension, which calls for educational reforms (PSA,2025).

Table 1.2 shows a predominant female representation at 91.0% among participants, implying that results may reflect their English-speaking experiences. Khresheh (2024) notes that Saudi female EFL learners demonstrate higher self-efficacy, while local studies suggest that Filipino female students feel more confident in public speaking. Confidence is viewed as critical in linking English proficiency to performance.

Table 1.3 reveals that 61.2% of respondents are from the Bachelor of Secondary Education program, emphasizing that results primarily reflect this group's confidence in English speaking. The data from other programs, albeit with lower response rates, remains vital for comparative analysis.

Table 2 indicates that students exhibit high confidence regarding learning English, viewing mistakes as part of the process (WM = 4.31) and recognizing its career benefits (WM = 4.28). However, they struggle with spontaneous speaking (WM = 2.81) and explaining complex ideas (WM = 2.82), suggesting a need for more practice in verbal communication under pressure. Despite a composite mean confidence level of 3.42, challenges persist, particularly in speaking-related activities, as highlighted by various studies that affirm confidence's positive correlation with speaking performance.

Table 3 indicates no significant differences in confidence levels in English verbal communication among students based on age, sex, or degree program, as all p-values exceed 0.05. The p-values for age (0.322), sex (0.595), and degree program (0.325) all support the null hypothesis that these factors do not affect confidence levels.

This suggests that confidence is influenced more by factors like practice frequency, experience, anxiety levels, and classroom environment. While results reflect similar confidence across demographics, context matters: the homogeneity of age among first-year students may explain the lack of variation. Additionally, small mean score differences should be acknowledged to identify groups with lower confidence. Challenges in English communication stemming from negative experiences can lower confidence and increase

anxiety, corroborated by Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis. The significance of English proficiency for the Philippines is highlighted, given its impact on academic performance, economic development, and employment competitiveness in the global labor market.

Table 4.1 indicates that 87.5% of respondents are aged 17 to 20, with no participants aged 21-24, and only one participant (12.5%) aged 24 or older. The results reflect a predominance of first-year college students, highlighting that the findings largely pertain to younger students' experiences in college, as noted by Creswell & Creswell (2018). This homogeneity in age may influence shared experiences related to adjusting to college and communication challenges.

Table 4.2 indicates a predominance of female respondents, representing 75% of participants, which highlights that the qualitative study primarily reflects the experiences of female students. Factors influencing confidence in English verbal communication are predominantly derived from female responses.

Table 4.3 reveals that all qualitative respondents are from Business Administration, a group selected due to their notably lower mean confidence scores in the quantitative assessment. While overall confidence levels appear high, the BSBA group demonstrates inferior confidence compared to other programs. Following Braun & Clarke's framework, qualitative research focuses on capturing nuanced experiences rather than seeking broader generalizations, thus targeting this specific group enables deeper exploration of their challenges and coping strategies.

Participant selection is outlined in Table 4.4, emphasizing the lower confidence levels of the BSBA cohort, consistent with purposive sampling in qualitative research.

5.1 Challenges in English Verbal Communication

The qualitative study identified that students face multiple challenges in English verbal communication, impacting their confidence. Three key themes emerged: affective barriers, perceived linguistic challenges, and sociocultural/environmental influences. These factors are interconnected, often reinforcing one another and leading to student hesitation and decreased confidence in various contexts.

Theme 1: Affective Barriers to English Communication

Students face emotional challenges impacting their confidence in English verbal communication, primarily characterized by fear, nervousness, and cognitive disruptions. These difficulties can be categorized into three interrelated subthemes: fear and nervousness while speaking, mental blocks leading to loss of ideas, and pressure from impromptu and graded tasks.

Subtheme 1.1: Fear and Nervousness when Speaking.

The responses showed that many students feel nervous when speaking English. This is often linked to how they see their own ability. For example, P1 shared, *"I feel nervous, ma'am, because I'm not really good at English. I'm not very confident*

speaking in English because sometimes I stutter and use the wrong grammar. That's really my problem with English." This statement shows that self-doubt plays a big role in their nervousness.

Fear of judgment is also clear in the responses. P2 stated, *"I still feel nervous because I'm afraid of being judged for my grammar and also being laughed at. Usually when we speak English, it's not really perfect or very fluent. That's how it is, ma'am."* This shows that students worry not only about making mistakes but also about how others react. P3 also shared, *"It's nerve-wracking, ma'am, because I'm not very fluent in English. Sometimes I stutter and have difficulty pronouncing words, especially difficult words."* This connects nervousness with difficulties in fluency and pronunciation.

Some students feel pressure because of their limited language skills. P5 said, *"Pressure when speaking English. My vocabulary is not very wide."* Similarly, P6 shared, *"Sometimes, ma'am, I feel like I might misinterpret what was asked, so I'm not very confident with my English."* These responses show that limited vocabulary and fear of misunderstanding increase anxiety.

Even preparation does not completely remove nervousness. P5 admitted, *"I still feel nervous even if I practice."* and further explained, *"For me, presentations are okay, ma'am, because you prepare for them. You already have time to get ready. But there is still some nervousness because of the audience. I might be judged. I'm not nervous about how I present, but I get nervous about the people listening to me."* This shows that the presence of an audience adds pressure.

Despite this, some students are still trying to improve. P4 shared, *"Same as them, ma'am. I'm still nervous, but I try to speak English more often because I know I will need it in the future for my professional endeavors and also for my family's future."* This shows that even with fear, students are willing to practice.

The learning environment also helps shape how students manage anxiety. When the classroom atmosphere is supportive and low-pressure, learners tend to participate more freely. Delos Santos et al. (2025) noted that a non-threatening space encourages students to take risks in speaking. Topado (2025) also emphasized that positive feedback and constructive guidance help reduce fear of making mistakes. By contrast, unstructured or overly critical environments may heighten anxiety, discouraging learners from participating at all.

In the city where the locale of the study is located, anxiety may be intensified by linguistic diversity and accent differences. Students from rural backgrounds or those with distinct regional accents may often feel less confident than their peers. Also, students who may have less or limited exposure to the English language might feel uncomfortable when asked to use the language. This mirrors the observation of Monib and Hadi (2025) that limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice can increase nervousness and

self-doubt. Thus, anxiety is not only an internal reaction but also a reflection of external conditions that influence students' comfort in using English.

Subtheme 1.2: Mental Blocks and Loss of Ideas During Speaking.

Another affective barrier identified in responses is the occurrence of mental blocks during speaking. This happens even when they are prepared or understand the topic. For example, P7 shared, *"I feel nervous especially during reporting. It's hard to understand sometimes. Then the words get stuck in my mind and I can't say them."* This shows that nervousness can interrupt their thinking and make it difficult to express ideas clearly.

P7 further explained, *"I experience a mental block, ma'am."* This highlights how students may suddenly lose their train of thought while speaking, even if they know what they want to say.

A similar experience was shared by P8, who said, *"Even if I practice, I still forget and lost concentration. There was a time with Ma'am Jenelyn that I was already prepared and memorized my speech but when I was in front of my classmates, I forgot so many parts."* This shows that preparation does not always prevent mental blocks. When students face an audience, they may lose focus and forget what they practiced.

These responses suggest that mental blocks are closely linked to nervousness and pressure. Even when students are prepared, anxiety can affect their concentration and memory. As a result, they struggle to organize their thoughts and deliver their ideas clearly during speaking tasks. This aligns with Asnaini et al. (2025), who stated that students struggled with internal factors that led to forgetting what they had already practiced. These internal factors can be visually seen through body language, such as trembling of voices or loss of focus

Subtheme 1.3: Pressure from Impromptu and Graded Tasks.

Building on the challenges of mental blocks during speaking, students also experience heightened anxiety due to the pressure associated with impromptu and graded speaking tasks. Results showed that one major source of pressure for students is being required to speak without preparation. As P4 explained, *"We are not allowed to search or write scripts. It should be impromptu opinions."* This situation forces students to think and speak at the same time, making it harder for them to organize their ideas.

This pressure can also be felt physically. P1 shared, *"I feel hot and my head sweats. Sometimes my body becomes cold."* In the same way, P8 stated, *"Impromptu speeches gives pressure"* showing how stressful these speaking situations are for students.

Even when students are able to speak, fluency is still a challenge. As the group expressed, *"We can deliver, but not fluently. Mostly we stutter"* and P1 added, *"We deliver for the sake of the grade, ma'am."* This suggests that students often speak because they are required to, not because they feel confident.

Grading also adds more pressure during speaking tasks. P5 explained, *"Reporting too, because English delivery is part of the grading criteria."* Similarly, P2 said, *"There is actually a criteria for English delivery, ma'am, especially during reports, so we really need to do it properly. If you don't do it well, it will really affect your grade."* These responses show that students are very aware that their performance affects their grades, which increases their anxiety.

For some students, grading creates both pressure and motivation. P1 shared, *"For me, it has both positive and negative effects. If it is graded, I really try my best because it will affect my grades if I do not do well. Sometimes it becomes pressuring because you worry that you must do it well since it is graded. But on the other hand, it also motivates me to try my best to deliver it well or even perfectly."* In the same way, P3 said, *"Both, ma'am. I feel challenged when it is graded. I will do everything for the grade. On the negative side, I feel anxious because it is graded and you need to do it properly. It becomes pressuring."*

However, not all students experience this pressure in the same way. P5 admitted, *"For me, it is negative because I become afraid of making mistakes since it is graded. Although it also motivates me to practice and prepare my speech."* P7 also shared, *"It is also pressure for me, ma'am, especially when grades are involved."* These responses show that grading can increase fear, especially for students who are already unsure of their speaking ability.

On the other hand, some students manage pressure differently. P6 explained, *"For me, it is neutral because I do not pressure myself about grades. Passing or getting above average is already okay for me. Even an 80 is fine so that I do not pressure myself too much. What matters is that I can perform."* This suggests that mindset plays a role in how students deal with speaking pressure.

It can then be inferred from the responses of students that pressure in speaking comes from both impromptu tasks and graded performances. While these situations can push some students to improve, they also increase anxiety and make speaking more difficult, especially when students feel unprepared or fear being evaluated.

Anxiety in speaking is not only limited to emotional discomfort but may also be physically visible. Hussain et al. (2025) observed that anxious learners may experience trembling hands, rapid heartbeat, and even dizziness when asked to speak in English. These symptoms disrupt concentration and affect fluency. The physical and emotional effect of anxiety makes students less able to organize their thoughts while communicating. This shows that anxiety affects both the mind and body, reducing students' ability to perform effectively in speaking tasks.

Being unprepared or “put on the spot” is a common trigger of language anxiety. Le (2024) and Asnaini et.al (2025) found that students who are asked to speak without preparation often experience discomfort. However, when students engaged in spontaneous yet meaningful conversations their ability to organize ideas improved and respond more effectively in English. Sunugon and Ong (2024) found that when students are given opportunities to express their ideas in authentic communicative situations, their responses become more coherent and purposeful. Also, when students believe that they are proficient, foreign language anxiety decreases. This belief results in more engagement in speaking tasks. This suggests that self-perception can either amplify or reduce the effects of anxiety (Almusharraf and Bailey, 2023).

Theme 2: Perceived Linguistic Challenges

While affective factors influence students’ oral communication in English, the findings also reveal that students’ perceptions of their own linguistic capabilities contribute to their confidence in speaking. These challenges are related to their perceived limitations in grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. These problems have been further categorized into subthemes: fear of grammatical errors, pronunciation and accent difficulties and lack of fluency despite understanding English.

Subtheme 2.1: Fear of Grammatical Errors.

One of the most common linguistic challenges identified in the responses is students’ fear of making grammatical errors when speaking English. As P1 said, *“Grammar and pronunciation.”* The group agreed, *“Yes, ma’am.”* This shows that students clearly recognize grammar as a major challenge. This concern becomes stronger because of expectations from others. P1 explained, *“Because we are already in college, people might say, ‘You’re already in college but you still cannot speak English.’”* This creates pressure to speak correctly, especially at their level.

Negative reactions from others make this even harder. P5 shared, *“When people laugh at you.”* P1 added, *“When people keep repeating your mistakes.”* These experiences make students more aware of their errors and more hesitant to speak. For some, it goes beyond the moment. P3 said, *“Sometimes it becomes your nickname.”* This shows how repeated mistakes can turn into something embarrassing and personal.

At the same time, students understand why they struggle. P4 explained, *“Because English is not our first language, so we struggle.”* This shows that they see their difficulty as part of learning a second language. Moreover, fear of grammatical errors is not just about accuracy. It is shaped by pressure, past experiences, and how others respond. These factors make students more cautious and less confident when speaking English.

Aulia et al. (2025) attempted to explore the perception of EFL students regarding the relationship between grammatical competence and speaking competence. The study

revealed that the majority of the students had the perception that learning grammar increased their fluency and confidence in speaking.

Similarly, Normawati (2023) found similar findings but mentioned that some students had contrary views. The objective of this study is to find out the perception of EFL students about grammar in speaking and writing. The finding reveals that EFL students perceive grammar as an important element of writing and consequently attach great importance to it in their writing. While other students think that grammar is essential for both spoken and written communication. The student's opinion on the importance of grammar for both speaking and writing is that it is essential for conveying and comprehending messages accurately.

Subtheme 2.2: Pronunciation and Accent Difficulties.

Another linguistic challenge experienced by students is difficulty with pronunciation and accent, which affects their confidence when speaking English. P1 shared, *"Our accent is very thick,"* and added, *"Our tone too, very strong."* This shows that students are aware of how they sound when speaking. Some also feel that their tone is misunderstood. P7 described it as, *"Like we are angry,"* while P8 said, *"Our Tone sounds so thick."* These responses suggest that students worry not only about correctness but also about how their speech is perceived by others.

Pronunciation itself is another challenge. P1 explained, *"Our tongue has a hard time pronouncing English which cause us to stutter."* This shows that speaking difficulties are not just mental but also physical, especially when forming unfamiliar sounds.

These challenges become more stressful because of how others react. P2 shared, *"Tagalog speakers sometimes laugh at Bisaya people because our pronunciation sounds hard."* In the same way, P3 said, *"Sometimes, especially with letters, ma'am. There are times when you mispronounce them, particularly when you are asked to read or when you are reporting. When you pronounce a letter incorrectly, people immediately judge you and start teasing you."* These experiences show that mispronunciation often leads to judgment and teasing.

Results then imply that pronunciation and accent difficulties are closely tied to students' confidence. It is not only about producing correct sounds, but also about how others respond. Fear of being judged or laughed at makes students more hesitant to speak, even if they are trying their best.

Learners often view American and British English accents as "standard". This belief can lead to feelings of inadequacy among students who speak with local accents. Most of them refrain from speaking due to insecurities about their "non-native" accent. Although students may be proficient in English, they often hesitate to speak. This is not only due to insecurities about their accent, but also a fear of being judged for it (Asnaini et al., 2025).

Zeng et al. (2022) cite a study that shows university students in Macao have very mixed ideas about English as a Lingua Franca. Some students prefer a native-like accent and care about others' opinions, while others prioritize being comprehensive over sounding native.

Another international study by Cennetkuşu (2022) said that aspiring English teachers in Turkey had a strong feeling of responsibility to act as models to their future students in regard to the language, particularly in view of the diversity of English. The study also observed that the students believed that it was a necessity that, in order to maintain credibility, they had to assume a "correct" accent, which meant, in most cases, an American or British accent. They did not object to exposing their pupils to different accents, but they refrained from teaching or using them in class, as it might cause confusion.

Subtheme 2.3: Lack of Fluency Despite Understanding English.

In addition to grammar and pronunciation, students also experience difficulty in maintaining fluency, even when they understand the English language. P1 explained, *"I can understand English, but when it comes to speaking, I am not confident, especially when speaking in front of others. Now we always have reports, and they must be in English. It is not like in high school where we could use Bisaya or English. Here in college, it really has to be English. It is pressuring for me because I am not used to it, especially since I returned to school after a long time. I think I stopped studying for about ten years. I feel like I am not used to facing people, especially when I have to speak English."* This shows that understanding the language does not always mean being able to speak it with confidence.

Nervousness also affects how students express what they know. P8 shared, *"It is difficult, ma'am, because I get nervous when speaking English, especially in front of others. Sometimes I end up using the wrong grammar."* Even when they know what to say, anxiety can lead to mistakes.

The same pattern appears in recitations. P7 said, *"Same for me, ma'am. When you recite, nervousness comes first. Even if you know the answer, you may forget it because of the pressure."* This shows how pressure can interrupt thinking and affect fluency.

In light of the findings, the responses show a clear gap between understanding and speaking. Students may know the language, but nervousness, pressure, and lack of practice make it hard for them to express their ideas clearly and confidently. Said and Omar (2023) studied the attitude of ESL learners towards the use of English as a medium of instruction and the problems encountered by them. The results showed that even if the students had a positive attitude towards English as a medium of instruction, they still encountered some difficulty in pronunciation and grammar. This difficulty reduced their confidence, which caused them to doubt their ability.

Giray et al. (2022) added that fear of making mistakes in terms of grammar and pronunciation reduced the student's tendency to speak in English due to hesitation and lack of fluency. While these findings point to the importance of accuracy, they suggest that students may even equate "correctness" in terms of being free from error, causing students anxiety rather than encouraging participation.

Kalhor et al. (2025) also attempted to conduct interviews on the sensitivity of the problem of fluency among undergraduate students of the University of Larkano (Pakistan). The results show that these students also had similar problems concerning grammar and pronunciation. It has also been stated in the study that problems associated with grammar and limited vocabulary hinder successful performance in speaking.

Theme 3: Sociocultural and Environmental Influences

The results further reveal that students' confidence in English verbal communication is shaped not only by internal factors but also by sociocultural and environmental influences. Such effects are evident in their experiences of judgment, classroom expectations, social relationships, and communication environments. These are further categorized into the following subthemes: fear of judgment and ridicule, teacher practices and classroom demand, peer and family influence, and safe versus unsafe communication spaces.

Subtheme 3.1: Fear of Judgment and Ridicule.

A clear pattern that is reflected from the responses is the fear of being judged when speaking English. P8 pointed this out directly, *"Yes ma'am, the judgment of the listeners."* P7 shared a similar feeling, *"The thought of being judged never disappears."* This shows that the fear is constant and stays with students whenever they speak.

There is also pressure that comes from being in college. As P4 said, *"College students should be more mature."* This suggests that students feel expected to perform better, and when they think they fall short, it increases their anxiety.

For some students, this goes beyond simple judgment and becomes discrimination. As P6 shared her point of view, *"For me, ma'am, people discriminate if you cannot speak English."* and added, *"In the Philippines, speaking English is sometimes the measure of intelligence. Some Tagalog speakers discriminate against Bisaya people and think they are more intelligent."* These responses show that language ability can affect how students are viewed by others.

The impact becomes more personal through experience. P2 shared, *"Being judged, ma'am. Like what I mentioned earlier, ma'am, when I am judged or corrected, it really stays in my mind. I end up telling myself not to speak English anymore because*

I become afraid of being judged again.” This shows how negative experiences can stay with students and affect their confidence.

This fear becomes stronger when speaking in front of others. P2 explained, *“It is really nerve-wracking, ma’am, especially when there are many people and you are asked to speak in front of them, particularly if you are not close to them or you do not know them well. I feel nervous because I am afraid of being judged. I worry that after I speak, people might start talking about me, like saying, ‘Why does she speak like that? Look at her grammar or her pronunciation.’ I feel like they might talk about me instead.”* This shows that students often expect negative reactions even before they speak.

Because of this, some students choose to stay quiet. P1 admitted, *“I am really afraid, ma’am, because I admit that I am not very good at speaking English. Even before, I already complained a lot about English.”* P6 also shared, *“It affects me, ma’am, especially because I know I am not perfect in English, and the people I face might be perfectionists. In my family, there are many professionals. If you speak with wrong grammar, you feel like they judge you even just by the way they look at you. That is why I just adjust by staying quiet.”* These responses show how fear of judgment can lead to avoidance.

Moreso, the responses show that fear of judgment plays a major role in students’ confidence. It comes from expectations, past experiences, and how others react. Because of this, many students hesitate to speak even when they have something to say.

Another significant issue is overcrowded classrooms, which create an environment that is not conducive to learning. Monib and Hadi (2025) and Asnaini et al. (2025) said that these kinds of situations make it harder for students to participate actively. One of the consequences of overcrowding is the increase in classroom noise, which makes it difficult for learners to concentrate on lessons.

Positive interactions and feedback from peers can also help students feel more confident and less anxious. Group work and peer reviews are two activities that let students practice speaking without worrying about being judged (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2023). Arabis et. al (2023) added that students viewed collaborative learning as beneficial to language acquisition and the development of fluency. Conversely, a highly competitive classroom environment or the apprehension of being evaluated may deter engagement in speaking activities (Delos Santos et al., 2025).

Subtheme 3.2: Teacher Practices and Classroom Demands.

From the shared experiences of students, teacher expectations indeed clearly shape how students experience speaking English in class. P2 shared, *“Yes, Ma’am Jennalyn requires us to speak English. When we report, it’s English. When we answer, it’s English. Our oral responses must also be in English. We are forced to speak English because she doesn’t allow us to use any other language.”* This shows

that students are often put in situations where they have no choice but to use English, which can feel difficult and pressuring.

Still, the way teachers handle these situations makes a difference. P1 said, *"But she says it's okay even if our English is not perfect as long as we speak English."* This kind of response helps students feel more at ease and more willing to try, even if they are unsure of themselves.

Encouragement also plays a big role in building confidence. P2 shared, *"If they encourage me, I speak better because I don't feel afraid."* P3 added, *"It boosts confidence when someone helps you,"* and P8 said, *"It boosts your confidence when it's like that, ma'am."* When students feel supported, they become less nervous and more open to speaking.

Students also see correction as helpful, especially when it is done the right way. P1 said, *"I am okay if teachers correct me,"* but also pointed out, *"It depends on how they deliver their message."* P5 explained, *"You can learn from the corrections, ma'am, and then you can practice."* This shows that feedback works best when it is given in a calm and supportive way.

Patience is another important factor. P5 said, *"Teachers should have patience,"* and P7 added, *"Patience helps reduce nervousness."* P7 also shared, *"It's really different when there's a person who can help you. It motivates you."* When teachers are patient, students feel more comfortable and more willing to participate.

Students also shared what they expect from their teachers. P1 said, *"Teachers should help correct grammar and explain sentence construction."* P2 added, *"Teachers should believe in students and encourage them,"* and *"Understanding is more important than fluency."* These responses show that students value guidance, encouragement, and a focus on learning rather than perfection.

The findings pointed out that teacher practices and classroom demands can either increase pressure or build confidence. When teachers are supportive, patient, and encouraging, students feel more comfortable speaking. But when the focus is only on strict requirements, it can make speaking more stressful for them. The feedback and teaching style can both heighten foreign language anxiety and serve as a primary source that boost confidence.

Several studies discussed *Anxiety* section indicate that unstructured or high-pressure speaking activities and critical feedback elevate students' nervousness and avoidance (Le, 2024; Monib & Hadi, 2025). For example, Le (2024) demonstrated that students asked to speak without preparation often experience increased nervousness. When teachers provide limited scaffolding or emphasize error correction publicly, anxiety intensifies and participation declines. Conversely, research also highlights teachers as key mitigators of FLA when they adopt supportive practices.

Delos Santos et al. (2025) argue that a non-judgmental feedback style, scaffolded speaking tasks, and positive reinforcement encourage risk-taking and build students' self-efficacy. Sunugon and Ong (2024) reported that student-centered and authentic communicative tasks help improve speaking confidence. When teachers model strategies and provide constructive feedback, learners show measurable gains in their ability to speak confidently.

Subtheme 3.3: Peer and Family Influence.

Family and peers play a big role in how students feel about speaking English. For some, their experiences involve criticism that affects their confidence. P1 shared, *"Not totally. I already knew before that Tagalog speakers comment on the way we speak because they say our tone sounds hard. Even in my own home, my family criticize how I speak or pronounce words. The correct me and it annoys me at times."* This shows that feedback from both outside and inside the family can sometimes feel discouraging.

These experiences can also affect how students see themselves. P1 admitted, *"I feel belittled."* while P5 added, *"The ego is hurt."* P1 also shared, *"Of course! I am an elder sister and my younger siblings judge me. My ego is hurt."* These responses show that criticism, especially from close family members, can feel personal and hurtful.

At the same time, not all feedback is taken negatively. P1 said, *"Not necessarily! It motivates me to do better."* and also mentioned, *"Yes ma'am, my siblings especially my father also teachers."* This shows that even if correction feels uncomfortable, it can still push students to improve. Some students experience direct correction from family members. P3 shared, *"My aunt! Especially when she read my essays. She will correct me and make comment like 'did you go to school?'"* This kind of feedback can be harsh, but it also shows that family members are involved in their learning.

For others, family support becomes a source of motivation. P5 said, *"It will serve as motivation for me as its from my family,"* showing that feedback is taken more positively when it comes from people close to them.

P1 further explained how this works in daily life, *"My family, ma'am. Sometimes we just joke around when we speak in English and then I make mistakes. They laugh first, then after laughing they correct me. Since they're family, we just talk casually with each other. Usually, the ones who correct me are my younger siblings or my father. They teach me the correct pronunciation and grammar. I actually like it, ma'am. Although it really hurts my ego sometimes, I just use it as motivation. My younger siblings and my father are like that. My father especially pushes me to speak in English because, for him, English is our universal language. Wherever I go, I can communicate in English. I have something to rely on."* This shows that even when

feedback hurts, students can still turn it into motivation when it comes from supportive relationships.

P5 also shared, *"I have a friend who is half black American. His pronunciation is so perfect that it motivates me to do better."* This shows that peers can also influence students by setting examples.

On the other hand, feedback from friends can motivate or make students doubt themselves. P2 said, *"Usually, with my friends... they don't really correct me, ma'am, but sometimes they do with my accent, ma'am. Sometimes when I mispronounce something, they get surprised. It happened when I speak quickly, ma'am. Sometimes it becomes motivation, but sometimes I think, 'Oh no, I'm so stupid.' That word always sticks in my mind. When I'm speaking and someone corrects me, it always lingers in my thoughts. I can't get rid of it. I think, I'm useless. I look down on myself and it doesn't disappear immediately. It stays in my mind for a while."*

Summing up the trend, peer and family influence can both lower and build confidence. While criticism can hurt and affect self-esteem, it can also motivate students to improve, especially when it comes from people they trust and care about. This aligns with the findings of Ayu et al. (2025), who emphasized the positive effect of peer support on students' confidence and speaking ability while Supriyanto et al. (2024) highlighted that strong family support plays a vital role in encouraging students to practice and improve their English-speaking skills.

Subtheme 3.4: Safe vs. Unsafe Communication Spaces.

Students feel more confident speaking English when they are in a space where they feel safe and not judged. This is clear in written or online communication. P1 said, *"It's easier to construct sentences in the chat,"* while P6 shared, *"I'm confident only in written English, ma'am, because you don't make mistakes in pronunciation. Also, you have time to think compared to speaking."* P5 also added, *"You also don't worry about judgment because it's written."* These responses show that having more time and less pressure helps students feel more comfortable.

Online spaces also make students feel safer. P6 explained, *"Online, ma'am, because people there don't know you and they don't judge you."* This shows that when students feel less judged, they are more willing to express themselves.

Students also feel more relaxed when they are with people they are close to. P7 said, *"With friends because even if the grammar is wrong, we just laugh."* P5 added, *"I only use English with my friends when we talk about music."* These responses show that being in a comfortable group makes it easier to speak, even with mistakes.

However, not all situations feel safe. P3 shared, *"I really want to study English, ma'am, so I can practice. Though I'm really scared of mispronouncing words"*

when I speak English. That's why I prefer speaking Bisaya rather than English." This shows that fear of making mistakes can stop students from using English.

Some students try to build confidence in their own way. P2 said, *"Arguing with someone makes me feel confident in speaking English. I suddenly feel like a good English speaker."* and also shared, *"I'm somewhat confident speaking English anywhere because even I talk in Bisaya I usually use English words too. I am not fluent but I am somewhat comfortable with using English. Also I only use simple words. There are times my classmates laugh at me for using more English word in our casual conversations but I am comfortable with the way I talk."* This shows that practice in daily situations helps them feel more confident.

Encouragement also helps students feel safe when speaking. P1 shared, *"I have not really experienced being put down that much. But when someone encourages you, it really motivates you to try to learn English. Especially when they say that you can do it. It makes you feel motivated, like someone is cheering for you and believes that you can learn."* This shows that support from others makes a big difference.

In general, students feel more confident when they are in a safe and supportive environment. When they feel judged or afraid of making mistakes, they are more likely to avoid speaking English. According to Delos Santos et al. (2025), students become more willing to speak in a supportive classroom environment. Feeling safe from harsh criticism makes them participate more confidently in speaking tasks. Similarly, Topado (2025) emphasized that a low-pressure atmosphere, positive feedback, and guidance contribute to building students' confidence.

In terms of the physical features of the classroom environment, authentic materials have emerged as a significant contributor to language learning and confidence. Studies, such as that of Hoang (2022), found that watching English videos and observing how native speakers converse amazed learners with how they combine words and phrases, and how they create new meaning. On the contrary, Monib and Hadi (2025) stressed that the lack of authentic materials and opportunities for students to use language affects their progress. Students having fewer opportunities for speaking exercises contradict Stephen Krashen's belief in the importance of comprehensible input. It is the belief when learners need authentic materials that are slightly above their current level to promote progress.

5.2 Coping Strategies

In response to the challenges identified in English verbal communication, the findings of the qualitative study reveal that students employ various coping strategies to manage their difficulties and improve their confidence in speaking. These strategies serve as adaptive responses that support the development of their linguistic abilities and help reduce anxiety when using English.

Theme 1: Coping Mechanism

According to the results, students adopt different coping techniques to manage their difficulties related to speaking in English. These strategies serve as adaptive responses that enable learners to improve their linguistic abilities. Based on the responses, these coping efforts are manifested through various self-directed learning practices. These are further categorized into the following subtheme: coping mechanisms and strategies.

Subtheme 1.1: Coping Mechanism and Strategies

Students use different ways to improve their English and become more confident. One common strategy is reading. P1 shared, *“Reading, ma’am. Because when you read, you learn or discover words. You also get to check their meanings. For me, ma’am, I was really encouraged to read because my father told me that’s how people become knowledgeable. Before, those who read a lot were very good at English, and that’s why my father encouraged me to do the same.”* P3 also said, *“Reading for me too, ma’am, because you can learn many words,”* while P6 added, *“Reading, ma’am, because I really learn a lot from reading.”* These responses show that reading helps students expand their vocabulary and understand word meanings.

Another way students learn is through watching movies. P4 shared, *“Reading and watching movies, ma’am. Mostly, I watch western movies. I encounter words that are unfamiliar to me and learn how to use them in conversation. I also read the subtitles and see the spelling.”* In the same way, P2 said, *“Same here, ma’am, because I also learn many English words from movies. I really like cartoons, and they usually speak in English. Sometimes it’s better to watch because I feel lazy to read. I like watching because you also learn how they speak.”* These responses show that movies help students learn both vocabulary and pronunciation in a more engaging way.

Some students also use music as a way to learn. P5 shared, *“Listening to music, ma’am. Because from the lyrics, you can learn the meaning and how to pronounce the words.”* This shows that even simple activities like listening to songs can support language learning.

Other students combine different strategies. P7 said, *“Same as them, ma’am. I read and watch movies. You can learn a lot about how to speak English properly.”* P8 also shared, *“Reading, ma’am. Because if there’s a word I don’t know, it’s easy to look it up.”* These responses show that students use multiple ways to improve their skills.

The findings highlight the idea that students learned English through activities like reading, watching, and listening to improve their English. These strategies help them learn new words, understand pronunciation, and become more familiar with how the language is used. This result aligns with Sunugon and Ong (2024), who emphasized that enjoyment in language learning plays a significant role in promoting students’ oral communication skills.

In response to the findings of the study on the level of confidence of first year college students of a selected college in Butuan City, a program called Speak with Confidence: Enhancing English Verbal Communication Skills is proposed

Speak with Confidence: Enhancing English Verbal Communication Skills

I. Project Description:

Speak with Confidence is an intensive intervention program aimed at building up students' confidence in their English-speaking abilities. The design of this program relies on the insights derived from the results of the research which proves that students' confidence is undermined by language barriers and internal and external issues. While English remains widespread in academic and professional settings, many students demonstrate a lack of readiness to speak up in public forums due to a lack of confidence. This attitude negatively affects engagement, academic performance, and communication skills.

The program comprises carefully structured weekly classes where participants perform speaking exercises, take part in conversations, and work on their confidence through various training methods. Peer support and teacher-led instruction form the foundation of the program's approach to building a safe and positive learning environment. Within four months of one-hour lessons per week, students will have to go through several levels of guided speech exercises leading to more fluent communication without prompts.

II. Objective/s:

1. To improve students' confidence in speaking English
2. To reduce anxiety and fear in oral communication
3. To enhance fluency, pronunciation, and clarity in speaking
4. To develop positive attitudes toward English, including acceptance of accent and language variety
5. To encourage active participation in classroom communication activities

III. The Problem:

First-year students at Agusan Colleges Inc. have generally moderate to high confidence levels when it comes to speaking in English. However, it is notable that they do not always express themselves confidently in all communicative situations. While the learners have an optimistic approach towards acquiring English language skills, several situations have moderate results such as communicating in spontaneous settings or convey their thoughts clearly. According to the qualitative findings, students suffer from fear, nervousness, and mental barriers while expressing themselves in English, with much worry about making grammatical mistakes or pronouncing words incorrectly.

In addition, sociocultural aspects such as fear of criticism, pressure from families and peers, and classroom procedures play a role in hindering participation. Even though

students are knowledgeable in English, they find it difficult to communicate well in certain environments.

IV. Proposed Solution: (include method)

This project proposes a structured intervention program focusing on confidence-building and guided speaking practice. The program will involve teachers and selected peer facilitators in conducting weekly sessions.

Each session will include:

- Warm-up activities (icebreakers, confidence exercises)
- Guided speaking tasks (think-pair-share, role-playing)
- Pronunciation and fluency practice
- Group discussions and reflection activities

The program will follow a gradual approach:

- Guided speaking
- Semi-guided
- Spontaneous speaking

Peer support and positive reinforcement will be emphasized to create a safe learning environment. Teachers will use constructive feedback instead of direct criticism to reduce anxiety and encourage participation.

The program's effectiveness will be measured by post-confidence surveys employing the identical questionnaire used in the study, along with observing the participation of the students and their reflection answers. This process is intended as an evaluative measure to test students' confidence in English verbal communication.

V. Justification:

In the classroom setting, variations in class size and instructional demands may limit teachers' ability to provide individualized support for students who struggle with speaking confidence. As a result, many students remain passive and hesitant to participate in speaking activities.

This program addresses the issue by providing structured opportunities for students to practice speaking in a supportive environment. By incorporating peer interaction and guided activities, students can gradually build confidence.

One possible challenge is students' initial reluctance to participate. However, this can be addressed through engaging activities, supportive facilitation, and consistent encouragement. With proper implementation, the program can significantly improve students' confidence and communication skills.

VI. Timeline (phases of the project+ target dates of completion deliverables)

Phase	Target Date	Deliverables	Point Person
Pre -Launch: Pre-Implementation	Week 1	-Orientation of students and teachers -Administration of baseline confidence survey	Teacher / Researcher
Phase 1: Building a Safe Speaking Environment	Weeks 2–4	-Icebreakers, confidence-building activities -Establishment of supportive classroom norms	Teacher
Phase 2: Guided and Structured Speaking	Weeks 5–8	-Think–pair–share activities -Guided discussions and sentence starters	Teacher
Phase 3: Interactive and Collaborative Speaking	Weeks 9–12	-Role plays, group discussions -Peer feedback sessions	Teacher
Phase 4: Independent and Spontaneous Speaking	Weeks 13–15	-Supported spontaneous speaking tasks -Student-led discussions and presentations	Teacher
Phase 5: Assessment and Evaluation	Week 16	-Post-test confidence survey -Reflection activities and feedback collection	Teacher/Researcher
Completion	End of Month 4	-Recognition of students -Program evaluation report	Teacher

VII. Logistics (including all needed resources, e.g., budget, materials and equipment)

Resources (materials, equipment, manpower)	Projected Cost
Printed materials (worksheets, guides)	3,000.00
Certificates and recognition materials Snacks for sessions	2,000.00
Teaching materials (audio/video resources)	3,000.00
Teachers and peer facilitators	2,000.00
Total	10,000.00

Sample Speaking Activities

Phase 1: Building a Safe Speaking Environment

I. Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Participate in low-pressure speaking activities
2. Share simple personal ideas
3. Demonstrate respectful and supportive interaction

II. Content Focus

- Icebreakers
- Classroom norms for safe speaking

III. Learning Resources

- Guide prompts
- Board / visual aid

IV. Procedure

1. Engagement: Icebreaker: “Two Truths and One Lie” Students share 3 statements (2 true, 1 false) Class guesses the false statement
2. Processing: How did you feel while speaking? What made the activity comfortable or difficult?
3. Input: Introduce key norms: It is okay to make mistakes Respect all speakers Encourage, not judge
4. Practice: Class Agreement Activity Students suggest rules for a safe speaking environment

V. Assessment

- Participation

- Confidence (willingness to speak)
- Respect for others

VI. Reflection What helps you feel safe when speaking English?

Phase 2: Guided and Structured Speaking

I. Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Express ideas using simple sentence structures
2. Participate in guided speaking tasks
3. Demonstrate improved speaking confidence

II. Content Focus:

Guided speaking (Think–Pair–Share) Confidence and fluency

III. Learning Resources

Guide question Sentence starters Board / slides.

IV. Procedure

1. Engagement: Finish the Sentence
 - I feel confident when...
 - Speaking English is difficult because...
2. Guided Input
 - Introduce sentence starters:
 - I think... • One reason is...
 - Emphasize: communication over perfection
3. Practice: Think–Pair–Share

Why is learning English important?

Think → Prepare ideas.

Pair → Share with partner

Share → Selected students present.
4. Feedback & Reflection
 - Provide positive feedback
 - Question: How did the activity help your confidence?

V. Assessment

- Confidence
- Participation
- Clarity of ideas

VI. Reflection:

How did the sentence starters help you feel more confident?

Phase 3: Interactive and Collaborative Speaking

I. Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Participate in role plays and group discussions
2. Express ideas with improved confidence
3. Provide simple and constructive feedback

II. Content Focus

- Role play
- Group discussion
- Peer feedback

III. Learning Resources

- Scenario cards
- Guide questions I

V. Procedure

1. Engagement

Warm-up Discussion: Have you ever felt nervous speaking in front of others?

2. Guided Input

- Introduce role play and group discussion
- Explain simple feedback guide:
 1. What was good?
 2. What can be improved?

3. Practice

A. Role Play (Small Groups)

B. Group Discussion Topic: How can students improve their English-speaking skills?

C. Peer Feedback

V. Assessment

- Participation
- Confidence
- Interaction with peers

VI. Reflection What did you learn from your classmates today?

Phase 4: Independent and Spontaneous Speaking

I. Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. Express ideas more independently in English
2. Participate in student-led discussions
3. Demonstrate improved confidence in spontaneous speaking

II. Content Focus

- Supported spontaneous speaking
- Student-led discussions and presentations

III. Learning Resources

- Guide questions / topic cards
- Reflection prompts

IV. Procedure

1. Engagement: What topic are you comfortable talking about?
2. Guided Input
 - Explain supported spontaneous speaking
 - Remind students: It is okay to pause and think
 - Focus on expressing ideas, not perfection
3. Practice
 - A. Student-Led Discussion
 - Students choose a topic (social media, school life, future goals)
 - One student facilitates the discussion
 - B. Short Speaking Task
 - Students speak for 1–2 minutes about a chosen topic

V. Assessment

- Participation
- Confidence (willingness to speak)
- Respect for others

VI. Reflection How did you feel speaking without full preparation?

Phase 5: Assessment and Evaluation

I. Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Reflect on their speaking confidence
2. Evaluate their learning experience
3. Provide feedback on the program

II. Content Focus

- Reflection and Feedback
- Program Evaluation

III. Learning Resources

- Confidence survey questionnaire
- Reflection guide questions

IV. Procedure

1. Engagement:

Short Reflection Question: How do you feel about your English speaking now?

2. Evaluation Activity Students will answer the confidence survey questionnaire

3. Reflection

Guided Questions:

- What improvements did you notice?
- What activities helped you the most?
- What challenges remain?

4. Feedback Collection

- Students give suggestions for improvement

V. Assessment

- Reflection responses
- Student feedback

Summary of Findings

The findings show that most of the respondents are between 17 and 20 years old, female, and enrolled in various programs. In addition, the qualitative phase was based on group who obtained the lowest confidence scores in the quantitative results in order to obtain more in-depth insights of the factors affecting their English verbal communication confidence.

When it comes to confidence in speaking English, students generally show a high level of confidence. This is evident in the overall means of quantitative study. Additionally, students showed positive attitude toward learning the language. Many of them accept that making mistakes is part of the process and see English as important for their future. Still, this confidence is not the same in all situations. Some students struggle when they have to speak without preparation or explaining their ideas clearly.

Looking at the differences based on age, sex, and degree program, the results show that these factors do not really affect students' confidence. Even if there are small differences in scores, they are not significant. This suggests that confidence is shaped more by personal experiences and learning conditions. This supports the idea of Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis that there are affective factors that affect language learning and acquisition.

The qualitative results gave a deeper picture of what affects students' confidence. Many students deal with fear, nervousness, mental blocks, and self-doubt when speaking English. They also face challenges with grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. On top of that, environment also played a crucial role in students' confidence. The fear of being judged, teachers' expectations, pressure from peers, and the setting could be both helpful and hindering for the students' confidence. Despite these challenges, students try

to develop themselves in a self-guided manner by taking part in activities like reading books, watching movies, and listening to music.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Most respondents are young, first-year female college students, indicating that the results reflect their experiences in speaking English. While students generally exhibit good confidence in English verbal communication and are motivated to learn, this confidence can waver, particularly during spontaneous speaking or idea articulation.

Factors like age, sex, and degree program do not significantly impact this confidence, but a qualitative study investigated the lowest-scoring students for deeper insights. Confidence is influenced by emotions (fear, nervousness), language skills (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency), and the surrounding environment (teachers, peers, family).

Despite challenges, students employ strategies such as reading and media consumption to enhance their skills and build confidence, which is further supported by a positive environment and practice opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

Teachers should promote regular speaking exercises to enhance students' confidence in English.

A supportive classroom environment is essential, reducing fear and encouraging participation without focusing solely on error correction.

Parents and peers must encourage students, as positive reinforcement fosters enthusiasm in communication.

Schools should integrate real-life speaking opportunities, provide multimedia resources, and support teachers through training.

An English Confidence Enhancement Program can be introduced, creating a positive atmosphere for practice.

Further research could broaden the participant scope to better understand confidence and proficiency in English verbal communication.

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