

Attitudes of Grade 12 Senior High School Students Toward Speaking English

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Abstract

This research study aimed to explore the attitudes of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students at Taysan Senior High School towards speaking English. The researcher employed a descriptive research design to gather information about the students' attitudes, English-speaking competence, and problems they encountered while speaking English. A questionnaire was developed as the data-gathering instrument and was administered to a sample of 120 selected students using a simple random sampling technique. The findings revealed that the majority of Grade 12 HUMSS students at Taysan Senior High School had negative attitudes towards speaking English. This negativity stemmed from factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, feeling intimidated by native English speakers, and doubting their own English proficiency. Consequently, students were less likely to engage in English-speaking activities, leading to poorer

language learning outcomes. The study also identified challenges in pronunciation, self-expression, and vocabulary comprehension as significant obstacles that hindered effective communication in English. Despite these challenges, students still found a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when they could communicate effectively in English, indicating a willingness to learn the language. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended several strategies to address the identified issues. These included leveraging students' strengths in speaking and listening, creating a supportive classroom environment, incorporating real-world materials and situations, and recognizing students' progress. In line with this, the researcher proposed an action plan that incorporated these strategies and activities for the educational institution to implement a practice of a positive attitude towards English speaking among students.

Keywords: *attitude, English, competency, language, learning, speaking*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, English is regarded as the universal language, despite being a foreign language for many. Its importance is global, as most communications with other countries are conducted in English. Although English is not the most widely spoken language in the world, it is the official language of 53 nations and the first language of about 400 million people worldwide. However, researcher have observed that speaking English appears to be particularly challenging for senior high school students in the Philippines.

There are various factors that can affect how well students learn to speak English, and one of them is attitude. A student's attitude towards learning a foreign language, as emphasized by Gardner (1985), plays a crucial role in strengthening and encouraging their language acquisition. Kara (2009) and Abidin et al. (2012) stated that positive beliefs about learning a language tend to result in more positive attitudes, which in turn influence students' efforts and performance.

According to Dashti and Aldashti (2015), the attitudes and values students hold towards the English language and its importance to their future ambitions also plays a significant role in their ability to acquire the language. Students who recognize the benefits of acquiring a second language and view English positively are more likely to have better learning outcomes. Additionally, Lee and Huang (2015) said that students' beliefs about their own language skills and their confidence in their abilities can significantly influence their learning progress.

On the other hand, the integration of technology in language learning environments has emerged as a significant factor as well. Utilizing interactive multimedia software and digital storytelling can enhance students' oral language development by providing them with authentic and engaging language practice, as discovered by Kim and Chapelle (2015).

Oral communication skills are found to be crucial to students' overall language proficiency and self-expression. Incorporating oral language instruction in diverse educational contexts promotes critical thinking skills and effective self-expression (Wright et al., 2016; Bouzidi & Abdeljalil, 2019). However, there is a negative attitude towards speaking English among students in non-native English-speaking countries, including the Philippines. Factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and feeling intimidated by native speakers contribute to this negative attitude, hindering students' language learning outcomes (Toomnan & Intaraprasert, 2015). Anxiety related to learning a second language also acts as a significant barrier and decreases students' motivation to learn (Wu et al., 2022; Kim & Lee, 2015). Challenges related to language anxiety, a lack of confidence, and limited opportunities for practice and feedback hinder students' language learning progress and overall proficiency according to MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). Webb (2019) also stated that vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation are emphasized as essential components of effective communication skills. Targeted instruction in vocabulary acquisition is necessary to enhance students' overall English language skills.

As reported by the British Council (2019), despite the challenges, students in non-native English-speaking countries recognize the advantages of being fluent in English. Improved job prospects, increased opportunities for travel and study, better access to information and culture, and the ability to connect with people from other countries are some of the benefits that motivate students to engage in language learning activities. Just like in the Philippines, as an English-speaking country with a population that speaks the language at least somewhat fluently, English has been made an official second language. However, there is increasing concern about the English competency of graduates and students, particularly in speaking skills. The lack of opportunities to speak English both inside and outside the classroom significantly affects students' proficiency in the language. Hesitancy, resulting from learners' fear of making mistakes and being criticized, is one factor that affects their level of English-speaking competence. Attitudes toward bilingualism and the use of the mother tongue also influence students' English-speaking skills.

The researcher conducted this study to address the observed problem and their own experiences. They aimed to assess the level of English-speaking competence and attitudes towards speaking English among the Taysan Senior High School HUMSS strand students. The study aims to provide a clear understanding of the current situation and offer suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, the study seeks to develop and implement solutions to address the identified issues.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the attitudes of Grade 12 Taysan Senior High School HUMSS students towards speaking English.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of students' competency in speaking English?
2. How may the attitude of the students towards speaking English be described?
3. What are the problems encountered by students in speaking English language?
4. What activities may be proposed to engage students more in speaking English?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design is the plan and structure of an investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions. As stated by Robson (2002), the plan represents the overall scheme or program of the research. In this study, a descriptive research design was utilized. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the primary purpose of a descriptive research design is to provide information about the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. Descriptive research serves as a precursor to quantitative research designs as it offers a general overview and provides valuable pointers regarding which variables are worth testing quantitatively. The researcher aim to explore the attitudes of grade 12 HUMSS students at Taysan Senior High School towards speaking English. To gather the required information, the researcher will prepare questionnaires and distribute them to the respondents.

Subjects of the Study

The sample in this study is the Grade 12 HUMSS Strand students at Taysan Senior High School in School Year 2022–2023. The researcher agreed to use a simple random sampling technique to select respondents from each section. The number of respondents will be identified using Slovin's formula. As a result, 120 respondents are required in order to gather the accurate data needed for the study. Using a quantitative research design, a set of questionnaires will be given to each section, and their answers are required.

Table 1. Distribution of Taysan Senior High School Students by Section

Strand & Section	No. of Respondents	Percentage
HUMSS - Nobility	24	20%
HUMSS - Dignity	24	20%
HUMSS - Humanity	24	20%

HUMSS - Serenity	24	20%
HUMSS - Solidarity	24	20%
TOTAL:	120	100%

Data Gathering Instrument

The data-gathering instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was administered to the students of Taysan Senior High School within the school premises. The data collection process involved conducting the questionnaires offline, meaning they were administered in person or face-to-face.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions designed to assess the students' competency level, attitudes, and any problems they encountered in relation to speaking English. The questions were adapted to gather relevant information specifically related to the students' experiences and attitudes regarding speaking English.

Construction of the Questionnaire

The researcher constructed a questionnaire for the selected students of Taysan Senior High School. The questionnaire was printed and will be distributed manually in each section at a later stage.

Validation of the Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaires prepared by the researcher were presented to the adviser for comments and suggestions. After receiving feedback, the questionnaires were validated, approved, and a final draft was produced for administration.

Administration of the Questionnaire

A complete version of the questionnaire is produced for administration. The researcher seeks authorization before distributing the survey. Once the request is granted, the researcher.

Scoring of Responses

In order to determine the level of competency, attitudes, and problems encountered by students towards speaking English, the researcher tallied the total scores of each student. The following scores were considered in assessing the students' level of competency in speaking English:

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Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Very Competent
3	2.50-3.49	Competent
2	1.50-2.49	Moderately Competent
1	1.00-1.49	Not Competent

In order to know the attitudes and problems encountered by the students while speaking English, this scale rating score was used:

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.50-3.49	Agree
2	1.50-2.49	Disagree
1	1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree

The weighted mean was used as a tool in the statistical treatment of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the collected data, the following findings were obtained:

1.1. Level of Students Competency

The students' level of competency is determined by the use of the validated printed questionnaires administered by the researcher. Levels of competency are divided into four; the very competent, competent, moderately competent, and not competent.

Table 1. Assessment of the competency level of students in speaking English

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I can react intelligently and creatively to oral language in mass media and other technological innovations.	3.20	Very Competent	1
2. I can process speech at different rates that include pauses, errors, and corrections.	3.06	Competent	8

3. I can speak in clear, correct English appropriate to the situations by articulating sounds in intonations, and stress.	2.98	Moderately Competent	10
4. I can verbally give information and express needs, opinions, feelings, and attitudes.	3.18	Competent	2.5
5. I can react intelligently and creatively to oral communication experiences.	3.13	Competent	4.5
6. I can develop and sharpen critical thinking skills and reasoning ability through speaking.	3.18	Competent	2.5
7. I can recognize and respond to communication functions to utterances according to situations, participants, and goals.	3.11	Competent	7
8. I can offer clear and concise communication of information to others through speaking.	3.13	Competent	4.5
9. I can adjust my rate, volume of speaking and register to suit the topic, audience, and situation.	3.16	Competent	6
10. I can develop strategies for competence in oral discourse.	3.03	Competent	9
COMPOSITE MEAN	3.12	Competent	

As shown in the figure above, the study found out that the students consider themselves competent when it comes to speaking English, which obtained a composite mean of 3.12. The items that pertain to verbalizing information and expressing opinions, needs, feelings, and attitudes while processing speech at various speeds, including pauses, errors, and corrections. Intelligently and creatively responding to oral communication experiences, enhancing critical thinking skills and reasoning abilities through spoken language. Recognizing and appropriately reacting to communication functions in utterances based on the situation, participants, and goals. Delivering clear and concise information through speaking, adjusting speaking rate, volume, and register to suit the topic, audience, and situation. Developing effective strategies for competence in oral discourse made the students identify themselves as competent when speaking English. This indicates that the students have a high level of self-perception of their English-speaking abilities.

The result is in line with the findings of Lee and Huang (2015), who stated that self-perception was a significant predictor of language proficiency and that learners who had a positive self-perception of their language abilities were more likely to have higher levels of proficiency. Moreover, it is also supported by the findings of (Dashti and Aldashti, 2015). They explored the relationship between students' attitudes towards the English language and their language learning outcomes. They found that students' positivity or negativity towards the goal of learning English can significantly impact their ability to acquire the language.

Based on the result, students identify themselves as very competent with reacting intelligently and creatively to oral language in mass media and other technological innovations, which obtained a weighted mean of 3.20. It can be inferred that the students possess strong skills in comprehending and responding to various forms of spoken communication in the modern world, including those delivered through digital platforms and other cutting-edge technologies. Technological innovations can enhance the development of

oral language skills and promote creative and intelligent responses to spoken communication (Kim, Y., & Chapelle, C. A, 2015).

Furthermore, it can be seen from the table that the items referring to verbally giving information and expressing needs, opinions, feelings, and attitudes, develop and sharpen critical thinking skills and reasoning ability through speaking, and obtained the same weighted mean of 3.18, which suggests that the students perceive themselves to be equally competent in these areas. This implies that the students possess strong abilities to communicate their thoughts, opinions, and emotions effectively through verbal communication, and are capable of using oral language to develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills. This finding is related to the findings of (e.g., Wright et al., 2016; Bouzidi & Abdeljalil, 2019) that underscores the importance of incorporating oral language instruction in diverse educational contexts. Overall, it can be concluded that oral communication skills play a crucial role in improving students' ability to express themselves effectively and develop critical thinking skills. The high perceived competence in verbal communication among the students highlights the importance of providing opportunities for students to develop and improve their oral language abilities.

4.2. Attitudes of Students towards speaking English

Table 2. Assessment of the Attitudes of Students towards speaking English

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I enjoy speaking English.	2.24	Disagree	7
2. Being able to speak English makes me happy.	2.10	Disagree	9
3. Being able to speak English gives me a feeling of success.	2.54	Agree	1
4. Speaking English is important to me in general.	2.22	Disagree	10
5. I speak English to make my parents or teachers proud.	2.33	Disagree	2.5
6. I speak English because I want to do well on oral tests.	2.25	Disagree	6
7. Speaking English is important to me because I may study overseas.	2.29	Disagree	4
8. Speaking English is important to me because I may need it later for my job.	2.14	Disagree	8
9. I am not worried about making mistakes when I speak English.	2.28	Disagree	5

10. I am not afraid of being laughed at when I make mistakes while speaking English.	2.33	Disagree	2.5
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.21	Disagree	

As shown in the figure above, the study found out that the students disagree with the provided statements related to their attitudes towards speaking English, which obtained a composite mean of 2.21. The results show that the majority of the students have a negative attitude towards speaking English, as all statements received a mean score of 2.10 to 2.54, which falls under the "Disagree" interpretation. This is in line with the findings of a previous research study by Toomnan and Intaraprasert (2015), which reported a negative attitude towards speaking English among students in non-native English-speaking countries. The study highlighted that students had a negative attitude towards speaking English, which they attributed to a number of factors, including fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, feeling intimidated by native English speakers, and feeling that their English is not good enough. As a result, students were less likely to participate in English-speaking activities, which had a negative impact on their language learning outcomes. This suggests that the students do not completely enjoy speaking English, and even though they recognize its importance in both academic and career aspects, as well as personal satisfaction, they are not giving it much importance.

In contrast to the overall results, the statement regarding the feeling of success when able to speak English received the highest weighted mean of 2.54. This finding suggests that despite the students' negative attitude towards speaking English in general, they are still likely to feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction from being able to communicate effectively in the English language. A study conducted by the British Council (2019) found that 72% of students in non-native English-speaking countries want to be fluent in English because they believe that being fluent in the said language will provide them with several advantages, including improved job prospects, increased opportunities for travel and study, better access to information and culture, and the ability to connect with people from other countries.

Furthermore, as seen in the table, the items pertaining to speaking English to make their parents or teachers proud and not being afraid of being laughed at when making mistakes when speaking English obtained the same weighted mean of 2.33, which falls under the interpretation "disagree." This indicates that students are not motivated to speak English for external reasons, such as making their parents or teachers proud. They are also afraid of being laughed at when making mistakes, which can lead to anxiety and avoidance of speaking English. Similarly, these findings are supported by a recent study that showed that anxiety was negatively related to motivation. This means that students who were more anxious about learning a second language were also less motivated to learn it. Consequently, anxiety can be a significant barrier to second language learning (Wu, X., Yang, H., Liu, J., & Liu, Z 2022).

4.3. Problems Encountered by Students

Table 3. Problems Encountered by Students in Speaking English Language

Statements	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I have a limited English vocabulary.	2.87	Agree	1
2. I fear making grammatical errors.	2.43	Disagree	9

3. I have poor pronunciation skills.	2.76	Agree	3
4. I lack confidence in speaking English.	2.62	Agree	7.5
5. I have difficulty comprehending English words.	2.69	Agree	4
6. I fear being judged by classmates or the teacher.	2.66	Agree	5
7. I fear being misunderstood by the teacher or classmates.	2.80	Agree	2
8. I feel nervous when speaking in front of the class.	2.65	Agree	6
9. I have difficulty expressing thoughts and ideas in English.	2.62	Agree	7.5
10. I fear not being able to express myself effectively in English.	2.33	Disagree	10
COMPOSITE MEAN	2.62	Agree	

Based on the provided statements and their corresponding weighted means, it can be concluded that the students encounter a lot of problems when speaking English. It can be gleaned from the table that all statements regarding the problems encountered by the students when speaking English received a composite mean of 2.62, indicating that the students agreed with these statements. This finding is related to the study of Kim and Lee (2015), which found that many non-native English speakers experience anxiety and lack confidence when speaking English, leading to various problems in communication such as difficulty expressing themselves, making grammatical errors, and being misunderstood by native speakers.

Furthermore, it has been found that students agree that they have limited English vocabulary, which obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.87, followed by the fear being misunderstood by the teacher or classmates with a weighted mean of 2.80. This indicates that the students in this study are struggling with various aspects of spoken English, particularly with pronunciation and self-expression. These findings are consistent with previous research on language learning and communication apprehension, which suggests that learners may face challenges related to language anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited opportunities for practice and feedback (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2015).

Additionally, the students have also agreed that they have poor pronunciation skills, which obtained a weighted mean of 2.76. Based on the result, it can be presumed that students are facing challenges in pronouncing English words, which could further contribute to their difficulties in speaking English. This finding highlights the importance of improving students' language proficiency in both vocabulary and pronunciation to enhance their overall communication skills in English. It is parallel to a previous study conducted by Gao and Watkins (2015), which demonstrated a strong correlation between vocabulary knowledge and speaking proficiency among second language learners, emphasizing the need for targeted instruction in vocabulary acquisition to enhance students' overall English language skills.

Overall, the findings suggest that the high weighted means for all statements, which pertain to Agree, indicate that the given statements are frequently experienced by the students, and these challenges

have a considerable impact on the students' ability to speak English effectively. These challenges could negatively affect their confidence and motivation to learn the language.

4.4. Activities may be proposed to engage students more in speaking English

The researcher has identified that students struggle with various aspects of spoken English, such as pronunciation, self-expression, and vocabulary understanding. These challenges harm their ability to effectively communicate in English and their motivation to learn the language. The researcher will propose an action plan that incorporates strategies and activities for the educational institution to use and apply where the students are studying. The plan will include five types of activities that focus on the top five statements with the highest weighted mean in the table of problems encountered by the students regarding speaking English. This approach aims to address the problems faced by the students. Some activities can be combined to optimize outcomes, as certain statements are related to each other.

A study published in the Journal of Education and Learning (2015) demonstrated that the incorporation of strategies and activities can help students overcome the challenges they face in speaking English. The researcher of the said journal concluded that the students' challenges in speaking English could be addressed by providing them with more opportunities to practice, improving their vocabulary, and helping them to overcome their fear of making mistakes. They incorporated the strategies and activities that they found to be effective, such as group discussions, role-playing, presentations, debates, and online learning.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following were concluded by the researcher:

1. Students think they are good at speaking English, especially when it comes to processing speech, expressing themselves, and reacting creatively. They also have strong skills in comprehending and responding to various forms of spoken communication in the modern world.
2. Most students exhibit a negative attitude toward speaking English due to fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and feelings of inadequacy. This affects their participation and hinders language learning. However, many still experience a sense of accomplishment when they can communicate effectively, indicating a continued willingness to learn despite challenges.
3. Students struggle with various aspects of spoken English, such as pronunciation, self-expression, and understanding vocabulary. These challenges negatively impact their ability to communicate effectively in English and their motivation to learn the language.

Recommendations

The researcher generously recommends the following:

1. Use students' strengths as a foundation for learning. Implement activities that involve speaking and listening, create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom, and use real-world materials and situations.
2. Create a supportive environment by using interactive activities, emphasizing the benefits of English fluency, exploring diverse English-speaking communities, and recognizing students' progress.
3. Propose an action plan that incorporates the strategies and activities for the educational institution to use and apply where the students are studying.

4. For future researchers, it is important to also consider other social or environmental factors that may contribute to students' attitudes towards speaking English. Therefore, it is recommended that researcher take a comprehensive approach to studying the effectiveness of different interventions, which may include examining personality traits, cognitive processes, emotional states, and environmental factors.

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