

The Strategies of Grade 10 Students in Using English as a Second Language

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Abstract: This study investigated the factors influencing the English-speaking proficiency of Grade 10 students using English as a second language, with emphasis on learners' experiences, anxieties, classroom practices, and challenges. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected through surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with selected students. Findings indicated that learners' experiences encompassed both challenges and achievements. Many students reported nervousness and speech blockage due to limited vocabulary, code-switching, and pronunciation difficulties, while successful communication elicited a sense of pride and accomplishment. Speaking anxiety emerged as a prominent barrier, driven by fear of grammatical errors, peer judgment, and ridicule, often resulting in avoidance of English-speaking situations.

Classroom strategies included interactive activities such as role-playing, oral presentations, and game-based tasks; however, systematic support for vocabulary development, pronunciation practice, and authentic communication exposure was limited. To address these gaps, the study recommends implementing fluency-building exercises, contextualized vocabulary instruction, peer-assisted collaboration, and low-anxiety learning environments reinforced by mindfulness and positive feedback. Effective enhancement of speaking proficiency, therefore, requires integrated attention to linguistic competence, affective factors, and motivational support. The study emphasizes the need for learner-centered pedagogy, teacher training in communicative approaches, and increased opportunities for authentic English use. Cultivating an inclusive, supportive classroom environment is essential to enable Grade 10 learners to develop sustained oral competence, confidence, and communicative resilience in English.

Keywords: *Second Language, English Speaking Proficiency, Grade 10 Learners, Language Anxiety, Affective Factors.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill in the globalized world, particularly in countries where English serves as a second language such as the Philippines. Despite its role as the primary medium of instruction and a key indicator of academic and professional competence, many Filipino learners continue to experience challenges in developing oral English proficiency. Various factors—psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural—significantly influence learners' ability to speak confidently and fluently. Among these are language anxiety, lack of exposure to authentic communication, fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and insufficient classroom interaction. These challenges are more evident among Grade 10 students who are expected to demonstrate communicative competence as part of their curriculum standards. Understanding the underlying factors that hinder or facilitate second language speaking performance is crucial for

educators and curriculum developers to design more effective pedagogical interventions. Hence, this study aims to investigate the psychological, linguistic, and environmental factors that affect the speaking proficiency of Grade 10 students in English as a second language.

English, as a global lingua franca, plays a vital role in education, employment, and international communication. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (2023), many non-native English-speaking countries struggle with oral proficiency despite formal instruction in schools, with speaking identified as the most anxiety-inducing skill among second language learners. Globally, learners often report fear of judgment, limited exposure to real-life conversations, and low self-confidence as barriers to effective spoken communication.

The persistent challenge of oral proficiency among Filipino learners, despite early and extensive exposure to

English, remains a critical concern in English language education. Learners continue to experience difficulty expressing themselves fluently in international contexts. This discrepancy is primarily rooted in affective and psychological barriers such as fear of judgment, linguistic insecurity, and low self-esteem. English, often perceived in the Philippine context as a symbol of intelligence or social status, creates undue pressure on learners to speak flawlessly. This pressure frequently results in silence, hesitation, or avoidance of spoken English in high-stakes or intercultural situations, undermining communicative competence. Socio-cultural perceptions have amplified the psychological stakes associated with speaking English, thereby contributing to elevated language anxiety.

Krashen stated that affective filter hypothesis, emotional variables such as fear, embarrassment, and lack of motivation can block the acquisition and production of language. Filipino learners often report reluctance to speak in class or during interviews due to fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (2015) emphasized that learners experiencing high levels of anxiety are less likely to engage in speaking tasks and tend to perform poorly in oral communication. These affective challenges are worsened in classroom environments that emphasize rote learning and grammatical accuracy over meaningful interaction, thereby reinforcing students' apprehension about speaking English in both academic and international settings.

In Denmark, English language instruction is embedded in communicative and project-based learning, where students frequently engage in group discussions, presentations, and real-life simulations. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) noted that the integration of English media and low-stakes speaking tasks in Scandinavian classrooms encourages learners to speak confidently and without fear of judgment. Such practices contrast with many classrooms in the Philippines, where English instruction is still heavily text-based and examination-focused. The absence of spontaneous speaking opportunities limits students' ability to develop fluency and contributes to long-term language anxiety. Bilingual immersion programs in Canada have successfully integrated content-based instruction with language development, resulting in higher levels of fluency and confidence among students. Adapting similar strategies in the Philippine context could significantly improve learners' emotional engagement and spoken English competence in international settings.

There is a need to implement pedagogical innovations rooted in sociocultural theory. Vygotsky emphasized that language development is most effective within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners perform tasks with the guidance of more capable peers or instructors. Educational programs that include collaborative learning, peer interactions, and guided speaking tasks create safe environments where learners can experiment with language without fear.

Creating safe and interactive learning spaces is therefore essential in lowering the affective filter and fostering oral proficiency. Collaborative strategies, such as peer-to-peer

dialogues, role-plays, and structured debates, allow learners to negotiate meaning while reducing the emphasis on flawless grammar. According to Swain's (2015) output hypothesis, language learning occurs most effectively when learners are pushed to produce comprehensible output. These opportunities not only enhance fluency but also build learners' self-efficacy in using English for authentic purposes. In the Philippine context, however, many classrooms continue to prioritize accuracy over communication, which inadvertently sustains anxiety and hinders students' willingness to take linguistic risks.

Another promising approach lies in the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2018) argued that aligning language learning with learners' cultural identities increases motivation and reduces alienation in the classroom. Filipino learners, whose socio-cultural environment often values conformity and deference, may find English-speaking tasks intimidating if they perceive them as disconnected from their lived experiences. Embedding local contexts—such as familiar narratives, indigenous knowledge, and community-based issues—into oral communication tasks could help learners perceive English as a functional tool rather than a social barrier. This approach not only contextualizes learning but also lessens linguistic insecurity, encouraging students to view English as a bridge for expression rather than a marker of elitism.

Furthermore, research highlights the importance of teacher attitudes and feedback in shaping learners' affective responses to speaking tasks. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2015) found that positive classroom climates, where mistakes are normalized as part of learning, significantly reduce language anxiety. Teachers who provide constructive feedback, rather than punitive corrections, create an environment that encourages risk-taking and persistence in speaking activities. In contrast, error-focused feedback, often prevalent in grammar-centered classrooms, exacerbates fear of judgment and perpetuates silence among learners. Hence, a pedagogical shift toward encouragement and formative assessment can mitigate learners' apprehension and enhance their confidence in oral communication.

Technology-mediated platforms may also serve as tools to lower speaking anxiety. Reinders and Wattana (2015) demonstrated that digital simulations and gaming environments promote spontaneous English use by providing learners with low-stakes, interactive contexts. For Filipino students, whose exposure to English outside the classroom is often limited to formal or evaluative situations, incorporating digital role-play, virtual exchange programs, and online collaborative projects could offer safe yet authentic avenues for practice. These approaches mirror the practices of Scandinavian and Canadian models, where learners gain confidence through continuous exposure to meaningful communication.

Ultimately, addressing the affective and psychological barriers in English oral proficiency requires a multifaceted framework. Combining sociocultural approaches, collaborative learning, culturally relevant instruction,

supportive teacher feedback, and technology-mediated opportunities provides a holistic pathway to reducing anxiety and enhancing fluency. As Krashen's affective filter hypothesis suggests, when emotional obstacles are minimized, learners are more likely to engage actively in communicative tasks, thereby accelerating language acquisition. For the Philippine context, adopting these innovative pedagogical strategies could narrow the gap between formal instruction and authentic communicative competence, preparing learners to navigate both academic and global arenas with confidence.

In the Philippines, English is the second official language and serves as the medium of instruction beginning in Grade 4. Despite its longstanding integration into the educational system, recent national assessments reveal that Filipino students continue to underperform in oral English proficiency relative to global benchmarks. The Philippine National Achievement Test (NAT, 2019) indicated that many Grade 10 learners exhibit low competence in spoken English, a situation largely attributed to psychological barriers and insufficient opportunities for classroom interaction (Department of Education, 2020). This discrepancy underscores a significant gap between educational policy objectives and actual classroom practice in fostering functional communicative competence.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis offers a useful explanatory framework for these challenges, positing that emotional factors such as anxiety and low motivation can obstruct language acquisition and production. Observations in Manila public schools reveal that students commonly hesitate to respond unless their answers are rehearsed or memorized, whereas private schools with more communicative approaches report increased spontaneous use of English. In provincial schools, limited exposure to proficient English models and fewer qualified English instructors exacerbates the problem, elevating the affective filter and diminishing learners' opportunities for meaningful interaction. The emphasis on accuracy over fluency and the fear of correction further discourage oral participation.

To lessen these psychological barriers, English language instruction in the Philippines must prioritize communicative fluency through socially meaningful and low-anxiety speaking activities. Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that language acquisition is most effective within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners receive scaffolded support through social interaction. Emerging practices like peer collaboration, role-playing, and digital storytelling, provide learners with scaffolded opportunities to build confidence. These methodologies have the potential to lower affective filters and foster more active oral participation. Emphasizing fluency over grammatical perfection, encouraging risk-taking, and normalizing errors as part of the learning process are essential strategies to enhance Filipino learners' spoken English proficiency on both local and international stages.

Furthermore, international comparative research highlights how pedagogical orientation strongly influences

learners' oral proficiency outcomes. Scandinavian models, for instance, integrate English use into everyday classroom practices through collaborative projects, low-stakes oral tasks, and extensive exposure to authentic media. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) observed that such practices not only reduce speaking-related anxiety but also normalize English as a communicative tool, resulting in higher learner confidence and fluency. In contrast, the Philippine system continues to privilege text-based instruction and written assessments, leaving oral production underdeveloped. This imbalance reinforces the cultural perception that accuracy in grammar is synonymous with competence, while communicative confidence is neglected.

The importance of addressing language anxiety in oral proficiency development has been widely documented. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) introduced the concept of foreign language classroom anxiety, arguing that students with heightened anxiety are less likely to participate in communicative tasks and tend to perform poorly in oral evaluations. Recent studies confirm that Filipino learners share this pattern. Bernardo and Mendoza (2022) reported that Grade 10 learners in both Metro Manila and rural Bicol displayed avoidance behaviors in oral tasks, particularly when activities required unscripted speaking. Their study emphasized that learners who associated English speaking with public embarrassment or social judgment experienced greater hesitation, even when they possessed adequate vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. This indicates that psychological and affective barriers, rather than purely linguistic deficiencies, remain central to learners' struggles in spoken English.

Positive teacher intervention and classroom climate are also key factors in mitigating anxiety. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) found that students exposed to supportive, nonjudgmental environments reported higher enjoyment and lower anxiety in language learning. In the Philippine setting, where many learners report that teachers emphasize error correction over encouragement, such findings underscore the urgent need to reframe instructional practices. Teacher training programs should therefore equip educators not only with methodological tools for communicative teaching but also with affective strategies that normalize mistakes as learning opportunities. Encouraging peer support, valuing effort in oral tasks, and shifting assessment frameworks to include communicative competence could gradually reduce the fear of negative evaluation.

Technological integration also offers promise in alleviating psychological barriers to speaking English. Reinders and Wattana (2015) showed that game-based learning environments lowered affective filters by engaging learners in spontaneous English communication in a low-stakes context. For Filipino learners, incorporating digital storytelling, online peer exchanges, and virtual simulations could simulate authentic communication without the immediate pressures of face-to-face judgment. These innovations align with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory by providing scaffolded, interactive platforms where

learners can build confidence progressively within their Zone of Proximal Development.

In the Bicol Region, where Bicolano serves as the dominant first language, English language use remains largely confined to formal academic settings, limiting learners' exposure to authentic and spontaneous communication. Schools in areas such as Sorsogon and Gubat reveal that students frequently engage in code-switching between English and Bicolano, a phenomenon that De Vera and Gonzales (2021) identified as a significant factor affecting oral fluency. This linguistic interference, combined with insufficient opportunities for natural English practice, contributes to learners' difficulty in developing confidence and fluency. The transition from a predominantly mother tongue environment to an English-dominated academic context often triggers anxiety and self-doubt, which further impedes verbal participation.

The psychological impact of these linguistic dynamics is well-explained by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which asserts that emotional states such as anxiety and low self-confidence can obstruct language acquisition. In many public schools across the Bicol Region, students demonstrate hesitation when required to answer in English during class recitations or oral exams. The fear of negative evaluation, especially in mixed-language settings where peers may react critically, elevates the affective filter, causing learners to retreat into silence.

The experience of Foreign Language Anxiety, is particularly serious among learners in Bicol. Anxiety arising from social pressure, fear of making mistakes, and the stigma attached to non-native accents limits students' willingness to engage in English speaking tasks. It arises from perceived social judgment by peers and educators, often manifesting as cognitive blocks or avoidance behaviors during oral assessments. Competitive academic environments that prioritize error-free performance, which conflicts with the communicative goals of language education.

In settings such as Gubat National High School, observations reveal that students often avoid volunteering responses or resort to memorized answers to minimize the risk of embarrassment. This anxiety is compounded by a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, as English is rarely used in daily social interactions. Consequently, learners face a dual challenge: overcoming both linguistic interference and psychological barriers to speaking English confidently. The limited presence of English-speaking role models in Bicol further worsens this issue, making it difficult for learners to visualize themselves as competent English speakers.

Addressing these challenges requires a pedagogical shift that integrates Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing social interaction and scaffolded learning within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Implementing collaborative speaking activities, peer feedback sessions, and contextualized role-plays in classrooms could lower affective barriers and promote greater

oral participation. Furthermore, teacher training focused on creating low-anxiety environments and valuing fluency alongside accuracy is essential.

Specifically, in Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon, a rural coastal municipality, schools encounter considerable challenges that impact learners' English-speaking proficiency. Overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of targeted language support programs, and minimal exposure to English outside the school environment combine to create a context where learners experience considerable affective barriers. It reveals that many Grade 10 students exhibit hesitancy and self-consciousness during oral English tasks, frequently relying on memorized phrases rather than spontaneous communication. These findings call for a thorough examination into the psychological and social factors influencing learners' spoken English in this setting and highlight the need for pedagogical innovation tailored to local realities.

The phenomenon of anxiety in oral communication among Filipino learners in Prieto Diaz is consistent with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that high anxiety levels create mental barriers that inhibit language acquisition. The psychological burden faced by learners in these rural schools is intensified by fear of negative evaluation from peers and teachers, leading to avoidance behaviors during speaking activities. The lack of a safe and encouraging classroom atmosphere further exacerbates this problem, as students feel pressured to provide "correct" answers rather than engage in authentic communicative exchanges.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to discover the different factors affecting in speaking English as the second language by the grade 10 students. This study answered the following questions:

- What are the experiences of Grade 10 students in using English as a second Language?
- What are the anxieties of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language?
- What are the different classroom-based activities employed by teachers in using English as a second language?
- What are the gaps and issues encountered by students in the use of English as a second language?
- What innovative approaches could be proposed to improve the speaking ability of the students using the second language?

III. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to determine and analyze the experiences, anxieties, classroom-based activities, and challenges encountered by Grade 10 students in using English as a second language.

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to identify participants who could provide relevant and meaningful insights into the research problem. Purposive

sampling was deemed appropriate because the study sought to obtain detailed and specific information from learners with direct experiences in using English as a second language (L2) within classroom and real-life contexts.

The participants consisted of Grade 10 learners enrolled in two public secondary schools; San Rafael Integrated School and Prieto Diaz National High School, located in the Prieto Diaz District of Sorsogon, Philippines. The selection criteria included learners with varying levels of English-speaking confidence, classroom participation, and exposure to English communication activities. This ensured the inclusion of both proficient and struggling speakers, thereby providing a broad spectrum of perspectives.

A total of forty-five (45) respondents participated in the study, comprising thirteen (13) learners from San Rafael Integrated School and thirty-two (32) learners from Prieto Diaz National High School. The chosen sample size was considered sufficient to yield reliable descriptive data while remaining manageable for systematic analysis.

IV. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETSTION OF DATA

A. Experiences of Grade 10 Students in Using English as a Second Language

The English language has long been recognized as a primary medium of instruction for core academic subjects such as Science, Mathematics, Technology, and Communication Arts in the Philippine secondary education system. Filipino learners typically acquire proficiency in English through structured and formal instruction, which aims to develop their communicative competence and academic literacy. Within the school setting, students are expected to demonstrate specific competencies in English, particularly in oral communication, as the language functions as a crucial instrument in learning and knowledge dissemination. Consequently, English is regarded as a second language (L2) in the Philippines due to its integral role in the academic and professional lives of Filipino students.

In the high school context, students are continuously exposed to various forms of instructional and interactive learning engagements designed to enhance their proficiency in English. These engagements—ranging from classroom

discussions and oral presentations to group activities—are primarily facilitated by teachers who serve as linguistic models and mediators of learning. Such structured opportunities provide learners with meaningful experiences that shape their attitudes and performance in using English as a second language.

Table 1.0 presents the range of experiences of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language. The data reveal diverse emotional and cognitive responses among the respondents as they attempt to communicate in English. Notably, 41 out of 45 respondents, or 91%, reported feeling nervous when speaking English¹. This finding suggests that nervousness is a prevalent affective experience among students, potentially rooted in their multilingual background. Most respondents are fluent in their regional language, Bicol, and in Filipino, the national language; hence, English—being their second language—naturally induces apprehension when used in formal or academic settings². Such nervousness reflects the students’ heightened awareness of linguistic accuracy and fear of making errors, which aligns with the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety described by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Similarly, getting tongue-tied when trying to express ideas in English was reported by an equal number of students (41 or 91%). This experience can be attributed to the cognitive process of mentally formulating ideas in their mother tongue or Filipino before translating them into English. The linguistic transfer between the first and second language can be mentally demanding, leading to hesitation and speech disfluency³. This finding echoes the observations of Krashen (1982), who emphasized that cognitive overload and affective filters—such as anxiety and self-consciousness—can impede spontaneous language production.

Collectively, these two predominant experiences—feeling nervous and getting tongue-tied—represent the most challenging aspects of using English as a second language among Grade 10 students. They highlight the psychological and linguistic barriers that learners face when required to use English in authentic communication. These findings underscore the need for pedagogical strategies that address language anxiety and promote confidence-building activities, thereby creating a supportive environment that encourages students to use English without fear of negative evaluation¹.

Table 1. Experiences of Grade 10 Students in Using English as a Second Language

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage %	Rank
Feeling nervous when speaking English as a second language	41	91	1.5
Getting tongue-tied when trying to express in English as a second language	41	91	1.5
Feeling proud when expressing correctly in English as a second language	33	73	3
Boosting confidence when communicating clearly in English as a second language	30	67	4
Mixing first language with English (code-switching)	28	62	5
Struggling to pronounce some words in English as a second language	25	56	6
Getting corrected by a teacher or peer (feedback)	24	53	7.5
Using gestures when English vocabulary fails	24	53	7.5

As shown in Table 1.0, the most dominant experiences of the respondents were feeling nervous when speaking English as a second language and getting tongue-tied when trying to express themselves. Both indicators obtained the highest frequency of 41, corresponding to 91% of the respondents, and were jointly ranked 1.5. These results indicate that anxiety and speech hesitation are the most prevalent experiences among Grade 10 students. Such affective barriers are commonly associated with fear of committing grammatical or pronunciation errors, fear of negative evaluation, and limited exposure to authentic English-speaking environments. Horwitz et al. identified communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation as central components of foreign language anxiety that impede fluency and spontaneous language use. Thus, the high frequency and top rank of these experiences suggest that students' difficulty in speaking English is largely affective rather than purely linguistic in nature.

The experience of feeling proud when expressing correctly in English as a second language ranked third, with a frequency of 33 or 73% of the respondents. This finding highlights the presence of positive affective experiences alongside anxiety. Feelings of pride reflect learners' recognition of successful language performance, which can enhance motivation and persistence in language learning. In line with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, mastery experiences strengthen learners' belief in their ability to perform tasks effectively. The relatively high frequency and rank of this indicator imply that despite challenges, students still experience moments of achievement that can reinforce their willingness to communicate in English.

Similarly, boosting confidence when communicating clearly in English was reported by 30 respondents, representing 67%, and was ranked fourth. This finding underscores the close relationship between clarity of expression and learners' confidence in oral communication. When students are able to articulate their ideas successfully, their confidence increases, which in turn promotes greater classroom participation. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis supports this result, emphasizing that lower anxiety and higher confidence allow learners to process linguistic input more effectively, thereby facilitating second language acquisition.

In contrast, mixing the first language with English code-switching was experienced by 28 respondents or 62%, placing it at rank fifth. The relatively high frequency of this indicator suggests that code-switching is a common communicative strategy among Grade 10 learners. Rather than indicating linguistic weakness, code-switching allows learners to compensate for vocabulary gaps and maintain conversational flow. Studies by Sert and Cook view code-switching as a functional and strategic resource, particularly in bilingual contexts such as the Philippines, where learners naturally draw from multiple linguistic repertoires.

Meanwhile, struggling to pronounce some words in English as a second language obtained a frequency of 25, equivalent to 56%, and was ranked sixth. Pronunciation

difficulties remain a persistent challenge for non-native speakers due to first language phonological interference. This experience may contribute to hesitation and reduced confidence during oral communication. The moderate frequency and rank of this indicator suggest a continuing need for explicit pronunciation instruction and exposure to accurate language models to support learners' oral development.

Lastly, two indicators—getting corrected by a teacher or peer and using gestures when English vocabulary fails—both recorded a frequency of 24 or 53%, resulting in a shared rank of 7.5. Corrective feedback plays a crucial role in language development by guiding learners toward greater accuracy; however, its emotional impact depends on how it is delivered. Similarly, the use of gestures reflects learners' ability to employ compensatory communication strategies. According to Tarone's communication strategy framework, such non-verbal strategies demonstrate communicative competence, allowing learners to convey meaning despite linguistic limitations.

Overall, the findings indicate that Grade 10 students' experiences in using English as a second language are shaped by a combination of high-frequency affective challenges (e.g., nervousness and speech blockage, ranked 1.5) and moderately frequent positive emotions and strategic behaviors (e.g., pride, confidence, code-switching, and gesture use). The distribution of frequency and rank across indicators highlights the importance of addressing language anxiety while simultaneously reinforcing positive experiences and communicative strategies. These results underscore the need for supportive and low-anxiety classroom environments that balance corrective feedback with encouragement to promote effective and confident second language use.

B. Anxieties of Grade 10 Students in Using English as a Second Language

Speaking English as a second language presents considerable emotional and psychological challenges for learners, particularly among secondary students in public schools. Language anxiety, a well-documented affective barrier, can significantly impede learners' willingness to communicate and adversely influence their confidence, participation, and overall performance during classroom interactions. In the context of Grade 10 students, such anxiety commonly manifests as fear of committing grammatical errors, apprehension regarding accurate pronunciation, and heightened nervousness when speaking in front of peers or teachers.

A comprehensive understanding of these affective responses is essential for interpreting how learners navigate English-speaking tasks and manage communicative challenges. Furthermore, recognizing the prevalence and intensity of these anxieties enables educators to develop targeted instructional strategies aimed at enhancing learners' oral proficiency while cultivating a supportive and low-pressure classroom environment. In line with this, the following table presents the specific anxieties experienced by

Grade 10 learners in using English as a second language, illustrating both the frequency of occurrence and the degree

to which these emotional barriers influence their classroom communication.

Table 2. Anxieties of Grade 10 Students in Using English as a Second Language

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage %	Rank
Nervousness when speaking English in front of the class	41	91	1
Afraid of committing grammatical errors when speaking	40	89	2
Fear of being laughed at when speaking English	37	82	3.5
Feeling uneasy when speaking in English	37	82	3.5
Worried to talk in English due to limited vocabulary	35	78	5.5
Conscious of words that are mispronounced	35	78	5.5
Avoid conversing when English is the medium	33	73	7.5
Afraid of being criticized when making mistakes while conversing in English	33	73	7.5
Doubting self when conversing in English	32	71	9

The data presented in Table 2.0 reveal the prevailing anxieties of Grade 10 students in speaking English as a second language (L2), emphasizing both the emotional and psychological struggles that accompany second language use. The highest-ranked indicator—nervousness when speaking English in front of the class (41 or 91%)—suggests that public speaking in English remains a major source of anxiety for learners. This finding underscores that classroom oral tasks, such as reporting, recitation, or oral presentation, heighten the pressure of performance. In line with Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), such heightened emotional states can inhibit the flow of language input and output, thereby constraining linguistic performance. The classroom setting, while designed to promote learning, also becomes a space of evaluation and exposure where students’ errors are visible, triggering nervousness and self-consciousness.

Closely following this, 40 or 89% of students ranked fear of committing grammatical errors as the second most common anxiety. This indicates a pervasive preoccupation with linguistic accuracy, suggesting that students equate correctness with competence. The tendency to prioritize accuracy over fluency often leads to hesitation and reduced spontaneity during communication. This observation aligns with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope’s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which identifies fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension as key components of language anxiety. The concern over grammatical correctness reflects students’ anticipation of judgment, reinforcing the idea that language learning anxiety is not only a linguistic issue but also a social and emotional one.

At rank 3.5, 37 or 82% of respondents reported fear of being laughed at and an equal number felt uneasy when speaking in English. These findings highlight the significant role of peer dynamics in language anxiety. The classroom environment—where peer evaluation and social comparison are prevalent—can exacerbate self-consciousness and discourage active participation. As Liu and Jackson (2008) observed, students’ willingness to speak a foreign language often diminishes when they fear ridicule or embarrassment. Consequently, affective factors, such as peer perception and

self-image, emerge as crucial determinants of communicative engagement.

Meanwhile, 35 or 78% of the students indicated being worried about their limited vocabulary and conscious of mispronouncing words. These anxieties demonstrate that perceived linguistic inadequacies compound affective tension. Learners who feel linguistically unprepared tend to experience a lack of communicative confidence, leading to avoidance or silence during discussions. This supports MacIntyre and Gardner’s (1991) findings that language anxiety negatively correlates with willingness to communicate and language achievement. Limited lexical and phonological mastery thus becomes both a cause and consequence of reduced L2 use.

Avoidance behaviors were also evident among respondents. 33 or 73% admitted they avoid conversing in English or fear being criticized when making mistakes. These avoidance tendencies rank 7.5 and reflect defensive coping mechanisms that learners employ to minimize exposure to failure. However, these behaviors are detrimental to language acquisition, as they limit opportunities for authentic communication and linguistic risk-taking—both essential components of oral proficiency development (Dörnyei, 2005). The fear of criticism underscores how evaluation-based teaching methods and corrective feedback can unintentionally reinforce anxiety rather than encourage improvement.

Finally, 32 or 71% of respondents, ranked 9th, expressed self-doubt when conversing in English. This internalized form of anxiety suggests a deep-seated lack of self-efficacy in using L2. Students’ doubts about their linguistic ability reflect a fragile learner identity, shaped by repeated experiences of linguistic struggle and social pressure. According to Bandura’s (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, individuals with low confidence in their capabilities are less likely to engage in tasks they perceive as challenging. Hence, self-doubt serves as both a psychological barrier and a predictor of reduced classroom participation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that affective and cognitive variables interact in shaping students’ English-speaking anxiety. The data indicate that public performance nervousness, 91% and linguistic correctness fear of grammatical error, 89% are the most significant anxiety triggers, followed by social fears being laughed at or uneasy, 82%. These collectively reflect how affective barriers remain a persistent challenge in English language instruction. Addressing such anxieties requires pedagogical interventions that create low-stress learning environments, promote communicative confidence, and value fluency alongside accuracy.

C. Different Classroom-Based Activities Employed by Teachers in Using English as a Second Language

Teachers play a crucial role in developing learners’ English speaking proficiency through the use of purposeful and engaging classroom-based activities. In second language (L2) learning, instructional strategies and interactive tasks significantly influence students’ motivation, participation, and communicative competence. Activities such as role-playing, games, and impromptu speaking tasks not only enhance linguistic skills but also help reduce anxiety and promote confidence in using English in authentic contexts. Examining the types and frequency of classroom-based activities employed by teachers provides valuable insight into current teaching practices that foster language development. The following table presents the various classroom-based activities utilized by teachers to improve students’ English communication skills and their corresponding frequency and rank.

Moreover, the selection and implementation of classroom activities must align with learners’ proficiency levels, interests, and socio-cultural backgrounds to maximize engagement and learning outcomes. Research suggests that learners are more likely to participate actively when tasks are meaningful, contextually relevant, and structured to scaffold their language production gradually. For instance, interactive tasks that simulate real-life communication scenarios encourage students to practice vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in an integrated manner, thereby reinforcing both accuracy and fluency. Consequently, a strategic balance between structured exercises and open-ended activities can optimize the development of communicative competence while maintaining learner motivation.

In addition, the consistency and frequency of these classroom-based interventions play a pivotal role in sustaining language development over time. Regular exposure to speaking opportunities, coupled with immediate and constructive feedback, helps learners internalize linguistic forms and develop self-regulation strategies in communication. Teachers’ awareness of learners’ affective needs, such as anxiety reduction and confidence building, further enhances the effectiveness of these instructional practices. Therefore, analyzing the prevalence and impact of different speaking activities not only reflects current pedagogical trends but also informs future curricular and instructional decisions aimed at improving English language proficiency among Grade 10 students.

Table 3. Different Classroom-Based Activities Employed by Teachers in Using English as a Second Language

Classroom-Based Activities	Frequency	Percentage %	Rank
Teachers provide game-based learning to support learners’ English-speaking skills	38	84	1
Teachers employ impromptu recitation to develop students’ spontaneous speaking skills in English	37	82	2
Teachers use role-playing activities to enhance students’ English communication abilities	35	78	3
Teachers organize panel discussions to encourage English speaking among students	35	78	3
Teachers encourage students to deliver oral presentations to strengthen their English skills	35	78	3
Teachers use audio-visual tools to support students in developing their English proficiency	32	71	4
Teachers conduct pronunciation drills to improve articulation in English	29	64	5
Teachers use debates to develop students’ English-speaking skills	27	60	6

The data presented in Table 3.0 highlight the frequency, percentage, and ranking of classroom-based strategies that teachers employ to develop students’ English as a second language speaking proficiency. The results reveal that game-based learning ranks first with a frequency of 38 (84%), indicating that teachers consistently utilize interactive games as a primary method to enhance language engagement. This top ranking underscores the belief that games not only make learning enjoyable but also reduce affective barriers such as anxiety, thereby fostering spontaneous communication and learner motivation. Studies by Derakhshan and Davoodi (2021) support this finding, asserting that game-based approaches enhance learners’ communicative competence and willingness to participate actively in English-speaking tasks. The predominance of this method suggests teachers’ adherence to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

approach, which promotes contextualized and meaningful language use.

Following closely, impromptu recitation ranks second with 37 responses (82%), demonstrating that this traditional yet adaptable classroom practice remains a vital strategy in enhancing students’ fluency and spontaneous verbal expression. Its high percentage implies that teachers still value real-time communication exercises that simulate authentic speaking scenarios. This activity aligns with Nation’s (2013) perspective that oral fluency develops through frequent exposure to spontaneous speaking opportunities, helping students overcome hesitation and build confidence in public expression.

Sharing the third rank with equal frequencies of 35 (78%) are role-playing, panel discussions, and oral presentations. Their equal standing signifies teachers' balanced use of both creative and structured speaking opportunities to cultivate various aspects of communicative competence. Role-playing fosters situational language use and social interaction, encouraging empathy and creativity, while panel discussions and oral presentations emphasize academic speaking and formal expression. According to Richards (2015), such task-based and performance-oriented activities enable learners to practice both pragmatic and academic discourse, contributing to holistic oral proficiency development.

At the middle of the ranking, audio-visual tools appear with a frequency of 32 (71%). This indicates moderate integration of technology in English instruction, highlighting teachers' awareness of multimodal strategies that enhance learners' exposure to authentic speech models and pronunciation patterns. However, its relatively lower rank suggests that while teachers recognize the potential of technology-enhanced instruction, they still prioritize face-to-face communicative practices that encourage direct interaction.

Meanwhile, pronunciation drills (29 or 64%) and debates (27 or 60%) occupy the lower ranks, reflecting minimal use among teachers. The infrequent implementation of pronunciation drills implies a shift away from traditional mechanical repetition toward more communicative, fluency-oriented approaches. On the other hand, the low frequency of debates suggests that teachers may find such activities too demanding for students with limited language confidence. Debates require higher linguistic competence, critical thinking, and affective readiness, which may not always be feasible in contexts where language anxiety is prevalent.

Horwitz et al. (1986) emphasized that performance-heavy tasks like debates can intensify students' language anxiety, discouraging participation.

Overall, the ranking pattern shows that teachers prioritize low-anxiety, interactive, and student-centered activities such as games, impromptu recitations, and role-plays over cognitively demanding tasks. This pedagogical trend reflects teachers' conscious effort to create supportive, confidence-building environments that promote authentic communication, aligning with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes learning through social interaction and scaffolding. The dominance of communicative and collaborative activities suggests a positive instructional orientation toward enhancing students' fluency, participation, and affective comfort in using English as a second language.

D. Gaps and Issues Encountered by Students in the Use of English as a Second Language

Despite continuous exposure to English instruction, many learners still face persistent gaps and challenges in using English as a second language. These issues often stem from linguistic, psychological, and environmental factors that hinder effective communication and confidence in speaking. Students commonly experience difficulties in vocabulary recall, sentence construction, pronunciation, and grammar usage, which affect their overall language fluency. Moreover, limited opportunities for authentic language practice and fear of making mistakes further exacerbate these struggles. Identifying these gaps and issues is essential for understanding learners' specific needs and designing targeted interventions to enhance their language competence. The following table presents the major gaps and issues encountered by Grade 10 students in their use of English as a second language.

Table 4. Gaps and Issues Encountered by Students in the Use of English as a Second Language

Gaps and Issues	Frequency	Percentage %	Rank
Learners engage in frequent switching, which hinders progress in building fluency in English	39	87	1
Learners have a limited vocabulary, which restricts their ability to express in English	34	76	2
Learners have difficulty understanding spoken English, which hinders them from connecting meaningfully with the language	31	69	3
Some learners manifest Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), such as fear of speaking in front of others, shyness, and nervousness	29	64	4
Learners' minimal exposure to real-life English conversation prevents them from developing fluency	17	38	5
Some learners found that the teaching strategies failed to meet their needs to be capacitated in speaking English as a Second Language	8	18	6

The findings presented in Table 4.0 reveal a multifaceted set of linguistic and affective challenges that hinder the development of English-speaking proficiency among Grade 10 students. These issues highlight the interplay between cognitive, emotional, and environmental factors that affect learners' performance and confidence in using English as a Second Language.

The most frequently reported issue, ranking first with a frequency of 39 (87%), is frequent code-switching, wherein learners often revert to their mother tongue when they struggle to express themselves in English. Although code-switching can sometimes serve as a communicative bridge in bilingual contexts, its excessive use can obstruct the habitual practice required to achieve fluency and linguistic automaticity. This finding implies that learners may still lack adequate competence and self-assurance to sustain

conversations solely in English, resulting in an overreliance on their first language as a communicative crutch.

Ranked second, with 34 students (76%), is the issue of limited vocabulary, which restricts learners' ability to convey ideas effectively. A narrow lexical range limits expressive capacity, compelling students to simplify their speech or avoid complex thoughts altogether. This limitation directly correlates with the tendency to code-switch, as insufficient vocabulary prompts learners to compensate using their native language. The lack of adequate word knowledge not only hinders fluency but also undermines learners' confidence, perpetuating a cycle of hesitation and reduced participation during oral communication tasks.

The third most common issue, reported by 31 respondents (69%), is difficulty in understanding spoken English. This concern underscores the receptive side of language learning and points to possible deficiencies in listening comprehension. Learners may find it challenging to follow native or near-native speech patterns due to unfamiliar accents, fast speech delivery, or limited exposure to authentic English input. Such comprehension barriers hinder interactive communication, preventing learners from meaningfully responding or engaging in discourse. This finding reinforces the importance of incorporating varied listening materials and authentic audio-visual resources to enhance comprehension and contextual understanding.

On the affective dimension, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) ranks fourth, with 29 respondents (64%) identifying it as a major concern. This type of anxiety manifests through nervousness, fear of error, and apprehension when speaking English in front of others. Such emotional barriers inhibit students' willingness to communicate and align with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits that heightened anxiety can block language input, thereby reducing acquisition efficiency. The prominence of this factor implies that psychological support and confidence-building classroom activities are crucial to mitigating the effects of anxiety on language learning performance.

The fifth-ranked issue, cited by 17 respondents (38%), involves minimal exposure to real-life English conversations. Many students' language interactions are confined to classroom contexts, limiting their opportunities to apply learned skills in authentic communicative situations. Without sufficient real-world practice, learners fail to develop pragmatic competence—the ability to use English appropriately and fluently in different social settings. This highlights the need for more experiential and immersive language activities, such as role plays, interviews, and community-based communication tasks.

Finally, inadequate teaching strategies, identified by 8 respondents (18%), ranked last among the listed concerns. Although the least frequent, this issue remains significant as it reflects perceived gaps in instructional approaches. Learners may feel that lessons prioritize grammatical correctness over communicative competence, or that classroom speaking activities lack sufficient scaffolding for

gradual skill development. This finding underscores the necessity for learner-centered and communicative teaching methods, which integrate both accuracy and fluency components while catering to students' affective and linguistic needs.

Overall, the data revealed that the major challenges encountered by learners in using English as a Second Language are rooted in both linguistic limitations (code-switching, limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulty) and affective-emotional factors (anxiety and low exposure). These findings call for pedagogical interventions that combine linguistic enrichment, confidence-building, and authentic communication exposure to foster sustainable improvement in English fluency among secondary learners.

E. Innovative Approaches to Improve the Speaking Ability of the Students Using English as a Second Language

➤ *Rationale*

The findings of the study revealed that Grade 10 learners experience substantial difficulties in using English as a second language, particularly in the areas of fluency, lexical development, and affective preparedness. As presented in Table 1.0, forty-one out of forty-five respondents, representing ninety-one percent of the sample, reported feelings of nervousness and instances of being "tongue-tied" when attempting to articulate their thoughts in English. These challenges are primarily attributed to the multilingual context of the learners, wherein Bicol serves as the predominant regional language and Filipino functions as the national medium of communication. Consequently, English, although institutionalized as a medium of instruction in major academic disciplines such as Science, Mathematics, Technology, and Communication Arts, continues to function as a secondary and anxiety-inducing language among students.

These findings resonate with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that emotional variables such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation directly influence second language acquisition. When students experience anxiety, their affective filter rises, preventing effective language input and output. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explain that language anxiety significantly interferes with learners' willingness to communicate, leading to avoidance behaviors and reduced classroom participation.

This chapter therefore presents proposed innovative interventions designed to address the identified challenges. The proposed approaches are categorized into three interrelated dimensions: (a) reducing learners' dependence on code-switching, (b) enhancing lexical proficiency through vocabulary enrichment, and (c) fostering communicative confidence while mitigating speaking anxiety. Each of these strategies is grounded in established research on second language acquisition, fluency development, and affective learning theories, thereby providing a theoretically informed and empirically supported framework for improving learners' English language proficiency.

➤ *Objectives of the Study*

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Document and analyze the experiences of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language, specifically focusing on challenges such as nervousness, pronunciation lapses, and code-switching, as well as positive experiences related to confidence and teacher or peer feedback.
- Assess the anxieties of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language by measuring communication apprehension, fear of grammatical mistakes, and avoidance behaviors observed in classroom interactions.
- Identify and evaluate the classroom-based activities employed by teachers, including game-based learning, impromptu recitations, role-playing, and audio-visual tools, and determine their effectiveness in reducing anxiety and promoting English-speaking proficiency.
- Determine the gaps and issues encountered by students in using English as a second language, including limited vocabulary, difficulty in understanding spoken English, frequent code-switching, and insufficient exposure to authentic English contexts.
- Propose innovative and practical approaches to improve the speaking ability of Grade 10 students in English as a second language, such as structured fluency drills, speaking circles, role-playing, multisensory vocabulary activities, and anxiety-reducing strategies, based on empirical findings from students' experiences, anxieties, classroom activities, and identified gaps.

- Different strategies be utilized by teachers to improve learners' use of English as a second language, including argumentation, debates, group work, and agree/disagree activities.
- Innovative approaches be proposed to further develop learners' ability in speaking English as a second language.

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V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The experiences of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language involve nervousness and feeling tongue-tied when expressing themselves in the classroom.
- The anxieties of Grade 10 students in using English as a second language include nervousness, fear of committing grammatical errors, and fear of being laughed at by classmates.
- The different classroom-based activities employed by teachers include game-based activities, impromptu exercises, recitations, and role-play activities.
- The gaps and issues encountered by students in the use of English include frequent code-switching, limited vocabulary, and difficulty in understanding spoken English.
- Innovative approaches to improve the speaking ability of students using a second language are proposed.

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Learners be provided with more oral activities in the classroom to enhance their use of English as a second language.
- Learners be engaged in exercises such as pair work, group activities, cooperative learning, and class discussions to improve their confidence and oral competence.
- Parents and teachers be encouraged to conduct regular monitoring of learners both in school and at home.

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