

Research Article

Exploring English Teachers' Narratives of Senior High School Students' Speaking Anxiety: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

This qualitative research examines English teachers' narratives of Senior High School students' speaking anxiety in Davao City, Philippines, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Through in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven English teachers, the study identified four themes: students' avoidant behaviors, classroom constraints as instructional challenges, maximization of student-centered practices, and the importance of empathy and patience in managing speaking anxiety. Findings revealed that students frequently demonstrated patterns of avoidant behavior such as hesitation, silence, and reduced participation due to fear of making mistakes and being judged, which affected their confidence and engagement in classroom discussions. Teachers also highlighted challenges such as large class sizes and limited instructional time, which made it difficult to provide individualized support to students with speaking anxiety. As a result, student-centered practices are implemented, including pair and group activities, guided presentations, and supportive feedback to encourage participation. Additionally, teachers emphasized empathy and patience as essential in fostering a safe and supportive learning environment for students. This study contributes to understanding teachers' lived experiences and provides insights into practical classroom strategies that may help reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' oral communication skills.

Keywords: Speaking Anxiety, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, English Language Teaching, Classroom Anxiety, Philippines

1. Introduction

Speaking is an interactive process of making meaning through the production of utterances, and Rajitha and Alamelu (2020) consider it one of the vital language skills in the English language classroom, as it enables individuals to express their ideas, exchange information, and communicate effectively using the language. However, Moafa (2024) stated that the anxiety of students is triggered when they experience fear of speaking and communicating in English. Furthermore, Tiang-uan and Oulis (2024) asserted that in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language anxiety is a significant issue that impacts the learning experiences of high school students. In the same research, it was revealed that the students' anxiety in speaking English increases due to nervousness in public speaking, feelings of worry about their English ability, and fear of making mistakes. These experiences are aligned with the Foreign Language Anxiety Theory of Horwitz et al. (1986), which posits that anxiety impedes one's ability to perform successfully in language class. It identifies sources of language anxiety, which include apprehension, feelings of tension, and nervousness. and worry. Because of these, students are hindered from actively participating in the learning environment and are limited in their capability to use the language in various contexts. Thus, understanding teachers' experiences in handling students with speaking anxiety becomes essential in developing responsive instructional strategies.

In Malaysia, Sim et al. (2020) found that communication apprehension or negative perception of one's ability to speak English is the main reason why university students experience English speaking anxiety. Since Malaysian students are very conscious of their English proficiency level, they tend to feel more anxious and worried about their speaking skills. In addition, Hadi et al. (2020) stated that Thai students faced difficulty in expressing themselves using the English language because they fear written works, they panic when they are not prepared to speak the language, they are afraid of hearing insults from peers and teachers, they lack confidence, and they have limited vocabulary knowledge. Simultaneously, according to Septiawan et al. (2025), some reasons for Indonesian students' speaking anxiety are due to a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, low speaking opportunities, negative attitudes towards English, poor English proficiency, and inability to use grammar correctly. These studies collectively suggest that speaking anxiety is influenced by psychological, linguistic, and instructional factors across different contexts.

In Metro Manila, a study conducted by Giray et al. (2022) revealed several factors that impede college students from using the English language and developing their speaking skills, which include the feeling of anxiety in speaking because of giving more importance to other people's opinions, and fear of being judged by others. Another study by Paraguas (2025) at Benguet State University stipulated that the speaking anxiety among students is high, which impedes their speaking performance and classroom engagement. Two factors cause students to become anxious when speaking, including internal and external factors. Internal factors include lack of confidence and motivation, being afraid of committing mistakes, nervousness, and shyness. External factors, as stated by Paraguas (2025), include insufficient English-speaking proficiency, using grammar

inaccurately, a lack of practice, and a limited vocabulary in English. Likewise, Cabansag (2020) found that English as a Second Language (ESL) students in Isabela encounter anxiety when speaking in front of the class, and their limited exposure to the language often makes them hesitant to participate in discussions, as they feel nervous about using English. These findings indicate that speaking anxiety remains a persistent challenge across educational levels in the Philippines.

In Davao City, it was reported in the study of Lindo (2026) that Grade 11 students face anxiety in speaking the English language as they are afraid of the negative judgment of others in the language classroom, and they also have communication apprehension, influencing their class participation and emotional well-being. Similarly, Cuamag et al. (2024) revealed that students in Davao De Oro encounter difficulty in public speaking, and they tend to manifest increased anxiety in speaking because of a lack of preparation and confidence, nervousness, and apprehension towards other people's views about their speaking ability. Besides, the study of Bordios et al. (2022) indicated that in Cotabato, Davao Del Sur, students lack confidence in expressing their thoughts in English, and they are reluctant to use the language because of anxiety caused by negative feedback and criticism from others. These local findings highlight the continued presence of speaking anxiety and underscore the need to understand how teachers manage these classroom challenges.

Previous studies have shown that students experience anxiety when speaking English (Cabansag, 2020; Hadi et al., 2020; Sim et al., 2020). Although these existing studies emphasize the problem, they offer limited insights about teachers' lived experiences in handling senior high school students with speaking anxiety, their personal challenges, and their coping mechanisms, since the studies employed quantitative methods. Moreover, most of the studies have participants who are university or college students (Cabansag, 2020; Sim et al., 2020; Bordios et al., 2022; Giray et al., 2022), yet only a few have been conducted in the senior high school context. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring English teachers' lived experiences in handling Senior High School students with speaking anxiety in Davao City, Philippines.

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this research aims to explore English teachers' narratives and provide in-depth insights into how they interpret, respond to, and manage students' speaking anxiety within classroom settings. Anchored in Foreign Language Anxiety Theory (Horwitz et al., 1986), this study examines how various factors influence language learning, speaking skills, and classroom participation. That said, school administration, policymakers, teachers, and communities will be able to reinforce effective language programs, practical instructional practices, and interventions to decrease the speaking anxiety and enhance the oral communication skills of students in the language learning environment by investigating this study.

This research aims to explore the lived experiences of English teachers regarding the speaking anxiety among senior high school students. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the narratives of English teachers in dealing with Senior High School students with speaking anxiety when speaking and in classroom participation?
2. How do they make sense of their experiences in relation to speaking anxiety?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative inquiry method, specifically an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, which aimed to explore and understand English teachers' lived experiences as professional individuals handling senior high school students with speaking anxiety. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2020) emphasized that this design captures people's experiences and how they perceived them.

2.2 Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The researchers selected seven English Teachers as participants of this study using a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, following a criterion of characteristics, which allowed the selection of participants with direct experience in handling students with speaking anxiety. The sample size of seven participants was considered appropriate as IPA studies typically involve small and homogeneous samples, allowing researchers to explore detailed and in-depth information regarding participants' narratives. According to Ahmed (2024), purposive sampling allowed researchers to choose participants based on their judgment of who could contribute best to the study.

The researchers gathered information about individuals with specific experiences, characteristics, and expertise needed in the study. Also, this technique deliberately selected participants with a clear manifestation of the phenomenon (Tajik et al., 2024). The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) participants must be currently-based teaching in Davao City, (2) participants must have at least one year of teaching experience, (3) participants must be licensed professional English teachers, (4) participants must be teaching senior high school students, and (5) participants must be handling English-based/related subjects. With that, this sampling technique was suited in this study as it allowed the researchers to logically select the seven research participants who have specific knowledge and experiences pertinent to answering the research questions of the study.

2.3 Research Instruments

The researchers maximized the in-depth, semi-structured interview with the use of an interview guide. It allowed the researchers to elicit rich responses and perspectives from the research participants. Further, the researchers also followed a list of core questions that were primarily asked of them. The goal of this instrument was to seek depth and capture the nuances of the lived experiences of the research participants. This instrument also allowed both the researchers and research participants to build a rapport and practice active listening. As Rutledge and Hogg (2020) described, IDI was used when an experience, including the behavior or feelings, cannot be solely observed.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers followed a rigorous process that aimed to analyze the essence of the lived experiences of the research participants. First, the researchers determined the suitability of the design for the research problem and afterward, sent an official letter to the principals of selected private, secondary schools, seeking permission to conduct the study. Second, the researchers conducted bracketing to identify their biases, experiences, and other assumptions about the topic to ensure that the study would not be affected. Third, the researchers used purposive sampling to identify the research participants of the study, and the researchers constructed an interview guide and approval sheets for the conduct of the study. Fourth, once permission was obtained, each research participant received an Informed Consent Form, informing them of the study's purpose, scope, significance, and procedures, while emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Fifth, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted once the ICFs were signed.

During the interview, the researchers also noted every crucial detail in every response of the research participants. Sixth, the researchers transcribed and analyzed the data gathered. Conclusion and recommendations were then made by the researchers. Specifically, the researchers used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). It is a qualitative data analysis that offers a closer lens to the lived experiences of individuals. According to Smith and Fieldsend (2021), it is about the idiographic, subjective meaning-making of the experiences of the research participants. These are the six distinct steps followed by the researchers in analyzing the data gathered: (1) Reading and re-reading, (2) Initial Note-taking, (3) Developing Emergent Themes, (4) Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes, (5) Moving to the Next Case, and (5) Looking for Patterns Across Cases. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data by reading the transcript several times, even analyzing the paralanguage of the research participants through the recording. Next, the researchers noted what was said by the participants, how it was expressed, and the deeper meaning behind the words. Then, the researchers grouped the data according to the gist of the experiences. After that, themes were structured to emphasize similarity and conceptual relationships. Then, the researchers repeated the first four steps for every piece of data collected from each participant. Once all were transcribed and analyzed, the researchers then made patterns across the dataset, highlighting how unique or similar each experience is.

2.5 Reflexivity and Trustworthiness of the Study

The researchers acknowledged their positionality as educators who may have prior experiences related to speaking anxiety. Reflexive journaling was conducted throughout the research process to eliminate any potential bias or distortion of the findings and maintain transparency. To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers followed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability strategies. Credibility was ensured through member checking and prolonged engagement. Dependability was achieved through documentation of procedures. Confirmability was supported through reflexive journaling and audit trails. Transferability was enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the research context.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The researchers conducted this study based on the guidelines and protocols set by the University of Immaculate Conception. The goal of this study was to explore the English teachers' lived experiences in handling Senior High School students with speaking anxiety, while ensuring that participants' rights, welfare, and confidentiality were protected throughout the conduct of this study.

Social Value. This study provided insights into English teachers' lived experiences in handling Senior High School students with speaking anxiety. The findings may help educators, school administrators, and policymakers develop responsive strategies and contribute to improving classroom practices and the existing body of knowledge on speaking anxiety.

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation. Researchers provided written informed consent, outlining the purpose, procedures, and scope of the study, to secure the research participants' approval for their participation in the study. Furthermore, considering that participants were professionals within educational institutions, voluntary participation was emphasized to avoid perceived pressure or obligation. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Vulnerability of Research Participants. Senior High School teachers, who were the potential participants of this study, may be busy with their teaching loads, requiring careful scheduling and flexibility during the data collection procedure. Hence, interviews were arranged at convenient times to avoid interference with instructional duties and administrative responsibilities.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and all responses were treated with absolute confidentiality and respect, protecting their privacy. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. The researchers also considered the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to additionally protect the research participants' personal and professional data.

Justice and Beneficence. The researchers were responsible for covering all costs incurred in conducting the study, without exposing the research participants to any distress or harm. To prevent biases in selection, the researchers established criteria for inclusion and exclusion to ensure equal and fair treatment of all research participants. Consequently, their autonomy and well-being in achieving the research objectives were also respected and maintained by the researchers.

Transparency. Research participants received informed consent forms to understand the objectives and goals of the study. Their contributions were also shown to provide context for how their responses affect the totality of the study.

3. Results

This section presents the study's findings, providing a comprehensive analysis of data gathered from the seven participants. This study aimed to explore

how senior high school teachers narrate, interpret, and make sense of students' manifestation of speaking anxiety within classroom contexts.

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

Code	Years of Teaching Experience	English Subjects Handled
1	1	English for Academic and Professional Purposes Oral Communication 21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World Practical Research 1
2	4	Reading and Writing Media and Information Literacy Creative Writing Creative Non-fiction
3	23	Practical Research 1 Practical Research 2
4	2	Media and Information Literacy Creative Writing
5	2	Front Office Services
6	1	Oral Communication Reading and Writing Disciplines and Ideas in Social Science
7	1	Creative Non-fiction Practical Research 1 Practical Research 2

As shown in Table 1 above, this is the individual profile of the seven research participants. It is noticeable that they all came from the same district and division of Davao City. More so, they were all from private secondary schools, teaching English and concentrated or related subjects.

Participant 1. Participant 1 is an English language educator with a year of teaching experience, specializing in English instruction that focuses on academic literacy, effective communication, global literacy analysis, and qualitative research methods.

Participant 2. Participant 2 is a proficient English educator with four years of teaching expertise at the Senior High School level, specializing in literacy, critical media analysis, and narrative expression using language and communication.

Participant 3. Participant 3 is a distinguished English educator and researcher currently pursuing a doctorate in English Language Teaching, while also serving as the Internal Research Coordinator.

Participant 4. Participant 4 is an English educator and school publication moderator with two years of teaching expertise with a diverse range of 21st-century competencies, including digital literacy, creative expression, hospitality management, and social analysis.

Participant 5. Participant 5 is an English educator who handles Front Office Services that practice and relate to English for Specific Purposes, such as focusing on oral communication excellence in hotel front desk operations, guest reservations, check-in and check-out procedures, and billing.

Participant 6. Participant 6 is a novice English educator with a teaching focus on interpersonal communication, academic literacy, and the systematic study of human society.

Participant 7. Participant 7 is a neophyte in teaching English and a research teacher with a focus on the development of literary artistry, qualitative inquiry, and quantitative analysis.

Report on Participant Findings' Narratives in Dealing with Speaking Anxiety of Senior High School Students

After completing the thematic analysis and interpretation of the findings, four themes were identified. These themes are closely connected to the study's research questions and reflect the lived experiences and perspectives of English teachers in handling speaking anxiety among Senior High School students. Furthermore, these themes align with existing literature on speaking anxiety, classroom participation, and the role of teachers in creating supportive learning environments that help students develop confidence in speaking English.

Table 2. Participants' Experiential Themes

<i>Participants' Experiential Themes</i>
Manifesting Avoidant Behaviors and Low Self-Confidence
Observing Classroom Constraints
Employing Student-Centered Practices
Practicing Empathy and Patience Towards Students' Speaking Anxiety

Manifesting Avoidant Behaviors

Among Senior High School students, avoidant behavior was found to be a common sign of speaking anxiety. These actions include being hesitant, nervous, quiet, and inactive in class. Persistent avoidance led to more anxiety and fewer opportunities for progress, which was evident in the responses of the participants below.

Participant 1. According to Participant 1, Senior High School students experiencing speaking anxiety often display various avoidant behaviors, which

include refusing to speak or saying “pass,” relying on classmates, or staying quiet to remain unnoticed. Physically and emotionally, this manifests through trembling, stuttering, nervous laughter, apologizing even before starting, or “freezing” as described by Participant 1.

Participant 2. As described by Participant 2, students go “blank during recitations.” This is often due to their fear of judgment and the dread of making public mistakes. This indeed hinders their ability to communicate effectively with others, which later on affects their willingness to speak in class.

Participant 3. As Participant 3 said, “students participate less in classroom interactions even when they understand the lesson.” Over time, students who consistently experience speaking anxiety may rely on written responses and avoid speaking opportunities, which slows the development of their communication skills.

Participant 4. According to Participant 4, Senior High School students exhibit speaking anxiety through both psychological symptoms, such as low confidence and fear of judgment, and physical symptoms, including stuttering, sweating, turning pale, or becoming inaudible, which are all conspicuous or obvious. Participant 4 stated, “I believe the students display conspicuous unconscious behaviors when they are obliged to speak or participate in class.”

Participant 5. Participant 5 observed that the majority of Senior High School students with speaking anxiety do not talk and participate during oral recitations because they are “conscious of their grammar and pronunciation.” Participant 5 also highlighted that “during English-speaking activities, I have noticed that many students are shy and hesitant to speak at first.”

Participant 6. Participant 6 noted that students with speaking anxiety usually speak in low voices and are shy because they have low self-confidence. According to Participant 6, students are also likely to excuse themselves from class or “persuade me that they do not have the courage.”

Participant 7. It was explicated by Participant 7 that such students stutter, hesitate, and do not participate in speaking activities because “they are afraid of committing grammatical errors.” Moreover, Participant 7 indicated that this is because students nowadays lack the basic competence in English, which makes it more “alarming.”

Upon making sense of their experiences, the teachers observed that Senior High School students with speaking anxiety manifested avoidant behaviors.

The findings of the study revealed that speaking anxiety of Senior High School students is commonly manifested through a pattern of avoidant behaviors. All research participants observed stuttering, hesitation, no eye contact, passive participation, nervous laughter, and even apologizing at the start. This is supported in the study of Taqwa et al. (2022), which stated that students with speaking anxiety are less likely to share their ideas, refuse to ask or argue, and are hesitant to participate. Likewise, Bashori et al. (2022) found that when teachers provide speaking activities during class, students encounter feelings of nervousness, pounding heart, stammering, trembling, and other strange body movements. That said, these behaviors indicate students’ discomfort and fear when required to speak in front of their peers.

Observing Classroom Constraints

Classroom constraints were identified as a significant obstacle in addressing speaking anxiety among students. These constraints include limited time and large class size. As a result, it reduced students' participation and engagement in class, restricting them from acquiring effective speaking skills. This was supported by the responses of the participants.

Participant 1. It was pointed out by Participant 1 that large class sizes and tight schedules make it difficult for teachers to provide personalized support for those Senior High School students with speaking anxiety. Consequently, instructional strategies are often hindered by a lack of time, heavy teaching load, and external factors that are beyond the participant's control and authority.

Participant 2. Participant 2 reported that teachers are pushed to use a general strategy that may be ineffective in addressing the speaking anxiety of the students because of having limited time and handling a large class. These made it more challenging to manage the speaking anxiety of the Senior High School students, as Participant 2 highlighted that "some need more personalized support." Thus, teachers face difficulty in supporting the progress and improvement of students' speaking skills.

Participant 3. Participant 3 encountered challenges in helping anxious Senior High School students participate in speaking activities while also meeting the needs of other learners. This is evident in Participant 3's answer, stating "one common challenge that I have witnessed is encouraging anxious students to participate in speaking activities while balancing the needs of other learners in the class." Factors such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, and heavy curriculum demands further restrict opportunities for individualized support and meaningful speaking practice.

Participant 4. According to Participant 4, "the class size impedes me from having a closer and individualized assessment among my students." Participant 4 added, "I believe the barrier is systemic because as much as we want exposure for our students, it is not plausible or possible because of the class size, the time constraints." As a result, students are not equally given a chance to speak, as teachers have limited time to assess all students in a large classroom setting.

Participant 5. Based on Participant 5's response, classroom constraints like "limited time and large class size" restrict the assessment of students' improvements. Consequently, when these occur, students only have "reduced opportunities" in developing their speaking skills. When they refuse to participate, they also miss the chance to improve their sentence construction, pronunciation, and their ability to converse naturally using English.

Participant 6. Participant 6 posited that "the biggest factor is the population of the students," which makes it difficult to monitor their individual progress. Subsequently, students demonstrate passivity over time, in which they "agree on having score deductions" rather than speak in front of the class, as affirmed by Participant 6.

Participant 7. Participant 7 stated that having limited time and class population hinders the support that could be given to students with speaking anxiety, as evident in the response, “I cannot have a longer time with my students, especially those struggling with speaking anxiety. That is why the classroom community should have a small number, so I can address everyone.” Both of which “bring lesser classroom participation and social interaction,” as they continue to struggle with speaking anxiety, as emphasized by Participant 7.

Upon making sense of their experiences, the teachers emphasized classroom constraints as the primary challenge in addressing the speaking anxiety of students.

All participants highlighted that limited time and large class sizes significantly hinder teachers’ ability to provide individualized support and effectively assess students’ speaking skills. Research participants noted that the need to cover other macro skills leaves little room for focused speaking instruction and emphasized that these constraints particularly affect students with speaking anxiety, who require additional guidance and encouragement. In the study of Bhutto et al. (2023), it was stated that, due to a large number of students and a lack of time, not all students’ needs are provided, and sometimes it is impossible to assess each student using a single instructional method, as their abilities vary with one another. It was also found by Atifnigar et al. (2022) that large class size hinders oral participation and limits interaction among students. A crowded classroom makes the teacher focus on a few students who are good at speaking, while the other students stay passive and unwilling to participate in the large classroom. Similarly, Barroga and Tampus (2023) found that classroom realities such as diverse learner needs, and the pressure to address multiple language competencies often constrain teachers’ capacity to implement communicative and student-centered language practices. Collectively, these challenges limit opportunities for students to develop confidence, fluency, and competence in oral communication, making it difficult for teachers to address their fundamental learning needs.

Employing Student-Centered Practices

Student-centered practices, including individualized and pair-work speaking tasks, group discussions, role-playing, and oral presentations, enhanced students’ confidence in speaking. These teaching approaches build a supportive learning environment where students can be motivated to participate and speak without fear of committing errors. This was manifested in the responses of the participants.

Participant 1. To create a supportive learning environment, Participant 1 began with low-stakes speaking tasks, such as pair work, group discussions, role-plays, and informal sharing activities, before gradually moving toward full-class presentations. This is for the students with speaking anxiety to “feel less pressure,” as stated by Participant 1.

Participant 2. Participant 2 specified that having an in-depth understanding of students’ experiences with speaking anxiety helps strengthen their empathy and patience. Participant 2 perceived the situation of handling students with speaking anxiety as a “continuous learning experience.” That being said, practicing such also allows teachers to attain the affective growth of the profession.

Participant 3. To help students manage speaking anxiety, Participant 3 used supportive and interactive speaking activities such as pair discussions, small group sharing, and guided presentations to build confidence “step-by-step”.

These practices include “supportive feedback, structured speaking tasks, and repeated practice opportunities,” which make students more comfortable expressing their ideas, according to Participant 3. Moreover, creating a safe and respectful classroom environment that values effort over perfection and reminding students that “making mistakes is a part of learning” increases their confidence in speaking.

Participant 4. Participant 4 pointed out, “the most effective strategies to alleviate fear of speaking are outlining the points of their speeches on a piece of paper, breathing exercises, and prepared speeches.” By doing this, it lessens the pressure of students to speak, and it makes the environment “non-threatening,” as described by Participant 4.

Participant 5. It was mentioned by Participant 5 that applying student-centered teaching strategies in dealing with speaking anxiety among students “should be done regularly,” as it helps them overcome this problem. With that being said, strategies such as role-play, simulated interviews, oral recitations, and other speaking activities “conducive” to students should be implemented. Additionally, Participant 5 said “by allowing them to answer and speak even if they commit mistakes” is a way to create a learning environment that is “positive and supportive.”

Participant 6. Participant 6 believed that utilizing student-centered practices in overcoming speaking anxiety among students is necessary to build their confidence and this is by allowing students to “speak in their mother tongue for them to fully express themselves when we have class discussion,” role-playing activities, and by giving them the chance to “share their views and opinions without judgment.”

Participant 7. Participant 7 highlighted that students must have “experiential learning,” or the experience of speaking, but before having such, students must be equipped with the basic skills, rather than just simple rote recall. That is why Participant 7 focused on implementing foundational activities like reading and oral recitations because “taking small steps” creates the necessary momentum that helps the students overcome their speaking anxiety.

Upon making sense of their experience, the teachers highlighted the importance of maximizing student-centered practices in supporting students with speaking anxiety.

All of the participants maximize student-centered practices for students to feel comfortable, heard, and seen. Both Participants 1 and 3 employed speaking activities in pairs or groups to make the students more comfortable and confident in speaking. This is supported by Angel and Rebalde (2025), who stated that to improve students' speaking skills, various strategies should be applied in class, including group discussions, role-playing, and pair work. Participants 3 and 4 also emphasized the importance of giving guided presentations and structured speeches to allow the students to gradually build their speaking confidence. More so, Participants 2, 4, 5, and 7 utilize teacher

encouragement, breathing exercises, positive feedback, and individual conferences, respectively, to personally support the students with speaking anxiety. Participant 6 even allowed the students to speak in their mother tongue to encourage participation. This is supported by Khoudri (2024), who said that there is a need to create a conducive learning environment that fosters speaking proficiency of students and reduces anxiety. With positive feedback and an encouraging atmosphere, students become motivated to engage in speaking tasks. These strategies lessen students' pressure and overcome their speaking anxiety.

Practicing Empathy and Patience Towards Students' Speaking Anxiety

Empathy and patience are the two important qualities that help students overcome their speaking anxiety. When teachers provide an environment that is empathetic and supportive, it allows students to express themselves freely. By doing so, it lessens students' anxiety in speaking. This was anchored in the responses of the participants.

Participant 1. Participant 1 also realized that it is more than grammar. It is about building the students' confidence, making sure that everyone is seen and heard. Participant 1 also emphasized that "learning is an emotional process and not just academic." It is also about appreciating the little progress and making a safe space for students to speak confidently over time.

Participant 2. Participant 2 perceived the situation of handling students with speaking anxiety as a "continuous learning experience." That being said, practicing such also allows teachers to attain the affective growth of the profession.

Participant 3. Participant 3 realized that difficulty in speaking is a common challenge that "requires patience, empathy, and continuous practice." These encounters have taught Participant 3 the importance of creating a safe and supportive classroom environment where students feel encouraged to speak. Moreover, Participant 3 said, "My journey has been a learning experience where I continually adjust my strategies to better support students' emotional and academic needs in speaking tasks."

Participant 4. Participant 4 acknowledged the fact that while the process may be uncomfortable, it is about the empathizing and "finding hope" in every little progress of the students. Participant 4 also emphasized that it is about "being patient in the potential of your students, when you wane, they will."

Participant 5. According to Participant 5, teachers need to be supportive, kind, and patient in helping students manage their anxiety in speaking. Through the promotion of a positive and non-judgmental classroom setting, teachers can aid students in developing communicative skills, particularly speaking. As Participant 5 said, "Be patient and kind, always find ways to help the students," therefore, even if it is hard to deal with students' speaking anxiety, there should still be emotional support given to them.

Participant 6. Participant 6 focused on allowing students to speak at their own pace and knowing in mind their individual abilities, hence being considerate and patient with them. Participant 6 also provided "moral support to my students," by believing in their capabilities and recognizing their daily

progress because Participant 6 also cared about “how they will have stable jobs in the future.”

Participant 7. Participant 7 also advocated that every teacher has different strategies and dynamics, but in this day and age, where students struggle to accept direct constructive criticism, patience is the universal approach to use. Additionally, Participant 7 complemented these by having individual conferences with the students to “let them feel that they can share their hardship, especially in dealing with their language and speaking problems.”

Upon making sense of their experience, the teachers acknowledged the significance of empathy and patience in managing the speaking anxiety of students.

All participants affirmed the need to be empathetic and patient in handling students with speaking anxiety. Participants 1, 2, and 3 recognized the subtle physical and psychological manifestations of speaking anxiety in students, and thus, allowed them to empathize with their situation. Participant 1 highlighted that it is an emotional process, while Participant 2 pointed out that being considerate, patient, and kind helps the students to overcome their speaking anxiety. Participant 3 described empathy concretely by giving continuous support, adjusting strategies, and creating opportunities for the students to manage their speaking anxiety. According to Zhang (2022), teachers who empathize with students heighten their motivation and willingness to participate in class. When teachers build emotional safety, love, kindness, and respect, they influence students' engagement in the language classroom. Giving emotional support to students, as stated by Wah (2026), diminishes students' anxiety in communicating with others and speaking confidently using the language. Besides, all participants emphasized patience in reflecting on what they have learned from their experiences in handling students with speaking anxiety. All participants believed that showing patience is a continuous learning process and a meaningful experience. All of the participants learned that it is about providing and creating a safe and supportive space for the students to speak. In order to address students' speaking anxiety, it was mentioned by Muqorrobin et al. (2025) that teachers should be patient, give time, and make an effort in helping students develop their speaking skills while alleviating their anxiety.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, one of the common issues Senior High School students experience is speaking anxiety, based on the narratives of seven English teachers, identifying four key areas, including students' avoidant behaviors, classroom constraints, student-centered practices, and the importance of empathy and patience. These findings suggest that speaking anxiety is influenced not only by students' fear of negative evaluation but also by classroom conditions such as limited time and large class sizes, which shape teachers' ability to provide individualized support. Students were observed to demonstrate hesitation and passive participation due to fear of judgment and lack of confidence, indicating that speaking anxiety affects both students' engagement and their opportunities for language development. Despite these challenges, teachers implemented supportive and student-centered strategies such as role-playing, oral recitations, and guided speaking activities. These practices reflect teachers' adaptive

responses to classroom constraints and highlight the importance of combining instructional and emotional support in addressing speaking anxiety.

Moreover, the findings emphasize that empathy, patience, and encouragement serve as essential affective strategies that help foster a supportive learning environment for students. Based on the findings, school administrators and policy makers, particularly within the Department of Education (DepEd), may promote speaking anxiety awareness in teacher professional development programs and in-service training to further develop teachers' student-centered strategies and classroom management.

Additionally, schools may implement language enrichment programs and activities that allow students to showcase their speaking ability and strengthen their confidence in speaking. Aside from that, teachers may adapt to various techniques that can address the needs of students, not only in speaking but also in other language skills. Also, teachers can benefit from collaborative sharing of best practices in handling students with speaking anxiety. Finally, future researchers may explore the lived experiences of students themselves, not just the teachers' narratives. They may also conduct a study that examines the effectiveness of an intervention program for reducing speaking anxiety and increasing speaking confidence among students.

Supplementary Details

Supplementary Materials & Data Availability Statement

Not Applicable

Author Contributions

Jefrey C. Adlawan contributed to the investigation of the study. Princess A. Campehios was responsible for conceptualization and investigation. Norhanian B. Sacatan contributed to the methodology, data curation, and investigation. Clarine M. Paraiso participated in the investigation. Ivan T. Barroga, PhD, provided resources and supervision, while Danilo G. Baradillo, PhD, handled the project administration.

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Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. All procedures conducted in the study involving human participants were based on the ethical standards and protocols set by the University of Immaculate Conception. The participants' involvement is completely voluntary, and they can withdraw anytime without consequences. If the participants decide to participate, they will be asked to sign this form. Further, they will be given a copy of this form as well.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Disclosure Statement (Use of AI Tools)

The researchers used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools or software, including Grammarly and Quillbot, in refining the paragraphs in the manuscript. Specifically, Grammarly was used to check the grammar, and Quillbot was utilized to paraphrase sentences. The researchers ensured that all AI-generated content had been reviewed and validated, taking full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of their work.

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