

I SPEAK BETTER ENGLISH: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES TOWARDS STUDENTS' ATTITUDE IN SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

Dave Aiken T. Ondes

Illana Bay Integrated Computer College, Inc., BARMM, Philippines

Stephanie Shane C. Leornas

Illana Bay Integrated Computer College, Inc., BARMM, Philippines

Rud-gie G. Paculanang

Illana Bay Integrated Computer College, Inc., BARMM, Philippines

Mark Dave D. Gatera

Illana Bay Integrated Computer College, Inc., BARMM, Philippines

Johana U. Caka, MAELT

Illana Bay Integrated Computer College, Inc., BARMM, Philippines

Corresponding author's e-mail: cakajohana24@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study used qualitative research design and a phenomenological approach. The participants of this study were five English Teachers teaching in the parameters of Parang, Maguindanao, BARMM, Philippines. The researchers used a semi-structured in-depth interview in this study. The findings of this study revealed the experiences of the teachers toward students' attitudes toward speaking the language. The study shows the behavior and performance of the students: fear and anxiety in speaking English; poor English speaking skills; the effect of social media; poor grammar in English sentence construction; discouragement caused by unfair judgment; use of jokes to skip English recitation; motivation and encouragement; providing opportunities and differentiated instructional activities. In addition, it also revealed the teachers' teaching methods and coping strategies regarding the students' issues with speaking the language. The participants made recommendations and coping strategies based on their personal experiences and challenges in order to create a program that would inspire and motivate them to improve their speaking skills.

INTRODUCTION

The attitude of the students towards learning a language can be defined based on their competency, experiences, and willingness to learn. Students may be motivated if the classroom environment is positive and the teacher can provide adequate materials to meet students' needs and promote student-centered learning. There are also unmotivated students if they do not feel comfortable participating in the classroom activities because of stereotyping, anxiety, and discrimination towards those who speak the language.

In Parang, Maguindanao, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines, the researchers sought a problem to determine the learner's attitude who can speak English fluently. Students have English-speaking proficiency, and it results in different attitudes and actions from their teachers. Students who have an English-speaking proficiency are more capable of speaking confidently, while others may be overconfident. Tanielian (2014) found that some students act well in class while others do not; some are nice, even too polite.

A study at Mindanao State University claims that the case of language anxiety towards English among ESL first year students, are linguistic difficulties: a poor command of grammar rules, lack of sufficient vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties cognitive challenges: self related cognition, fear of making mistakes and apprehension of others' evaluation, and social factors: presentation in the classroom or in public and the role of teachers in the classroom. Wherein, in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao the study found out that the anxiety in speaking English has common results towards English.

In the Philippines, one of the most pressing concerns in education today is students' attitudes toward learning. In some sectors, such as psychology and education, attitudes might differ. The output of a student's learning process is influenced by their attitude. Learning English can be successful if the teacher accurately recognizes the students' attitudes and constructs a good emotion to counteract the students' negative feelings, (Borja, 2016).

Theoretical Lens

According to Stephen Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory (1987), the learners' attitudes are individually driven traits towards their teachers. The way teachers interact and experiment with the learners can establish the classroom as a place that nurtures an appreciation for the unique abilities of each learner.

This theory relates the coping strategies of the teachers in which the teachers provide different instructional activities to enhance the speaking skills of the students and interact in each other.

As stated of Daniel Katz' Theory, a functional theorist, suggests that attitudes are formed according to how a particular person or thing meets our needs. To a functionalist, attitudes are shaped based on the personal benefit they offer. The example of this theory based on this research, one student might have a positive

attitude about the teacher because of his learning activities meet their interest and motivation. Katz, D. (1960) also notes that “we form attitudes to support our self-image or existing values”. According to the functionalist, an attitude will change when the needs of the individual change.

This theory will guide the English teachers through this research who have an experience to create a learning environment which would manage the learners have an attitude in speaking the language for better communication and development. Functional Theory of Daniel Katz (1960) can offer the potential to significantly improve the relationship of the teachers and students, enhance the accessibility of field-trip environments and retreats to the students together with their teachers.

B.F. Skinner Behaviorist Theory (1938), the behaviorist theory of learning in which learning is a process of ‘conditioning’ in an environment of stimulus, reward and punishment. Skinner explains the difference between informal learning, which occurs naturally, and formal education, which depends on the teacher creating optimal patterns of stimulus and response (reward and punishment), or ‘operant conditioning’.

The application of operant conditioning to education is simple and direct. Teaching is the arrangement of contingencies of reinforcement under which students learn. They learn without teaching in their natural environments, but teachers arrange special contingencies which expedite learning, hastening the appearance of behavior which would otherwise be acquired slowly or making sure of the appearance of behavior which might otherwise never occur.

In connection with this theory, English teachers guide and provide positive learning and reinforcement that needs to be applied in the classroom environment that promotes growth in their attitude towards speaking the language. This theory helps teachers get immediate feedback from students about their behavior. When the teacher rewards positive behavior, other students are more likely to copy that behavior to earn the reward. The rewarded students are also more likely to repeat that behavior because of the positive feedback.

The three learning theories: The Second Language Acquisition Theory of Stephen Krashen, the Functional Theory of Daniel Katz, and Behaviorist Theory of B.F Skinner are the foundation of the current study for the laid the pattern of English teachers strategies in handling learners with have an attitude in speaking the language.

Research Method

This study utilized the hermeneutic phenomenological design. According to Kafle (2011), as cited in Samson (2017), hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on subjective experience of individuals and groups. It is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subjects through their life world stories. This study was conducted at ARMM Regional Science High School in Barangay Sarmiento, and Ruth Manion Babao Memorial National High School, Parang, Maguindanao Del Norte, BARMM, Philippines.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted this study. The participants of this study were five (5) secondary English teachers, who were chosen. This research used semi-structured in-depth-interview guide questions in data collection which will be consider best fitted instrument to gather the needed data required in this study. The questions come from the thesis questionnaire regarding of this study.

Furthermore, the research instrument was validated by the panel members and the chairperson. The interview guide questions cover the domains in the research question.

The researchers gathered the data through one-on-one interviews or face-to-face interviews and introduced the study to the participants. During the interview, the researcher used various ways to record, such as taking handwritten notes and audio recording. Each participant was asked identical questions like background information and research questions. Still, additional questions will be made as probes during the interview. Permission was granted to audio-record the interviews for transcription purposes. It was made clear to the participants that their names would not be used in this study.

Result/Discussion and Findings

Through the process of identifying significant statements from each transcript of interviews to significant statement and formulation of meanings that establish the surfaced patterns, the themes were formulated. Three themes emerged to describe the teachers' experiences toward students' attitude in speaking the language. Three themes emerged to describe the teachers' challenges toward students' attitude in speaking the language. Three themes emerged to describe the teachers' coping strategies toward students' attitude in speaking the language.

Teachers' Experiences towards Students' Attitude in Speaking the Language

Teachers' Experiences towards Students' Attitude in Speaking the Language	Description
Fear and anxiety in speaking English	Students are afraid and discouraged to use the English language and they feel frightened because of the criticism of other students.
Poor English speaking skills	Students are not used in English language because it's not their accustomed dialect.
The effect of social media	The impact of social media to the English comprehension of the students; in a way that they rely mostly in technologies than reading books.

Theme 1: Fear and Anxiety in Speaking English

Three participants stated that the majority of their teaching experiences have been quite sad in terms of the students' attitude toward speaking the language. The shared stories of the participants about their experiences evolve the students' attitudes towards speaking the language. These experiences make them worried and help them identify the diverse attitudes of the students when speaking the language to provide the appropriate coping strategies to develop the oral and speaking skills of the students. They are afraid to speak in front of a group of people because they might be bullied and discriminated against by their classmates. The teachers were worried about students with a lack of self-esteem. The transcription is shown below:

*"Yeah! As we all know that our generation today noh? **They afraid to be ahm... what is that? Hmm, they could easily Discourage nah, noh?** Especially, if that particular student ah, aym, that ah, that particular student not really **confident** noh? So, that is why... Some of the students...Or some student who are ahm, hesitant to use the language the English language. (Through that, he has the hesitancy to use the language.)"* (Transcript 1, lines 99-115)

*"What I have experienced regarding the attitudes of my students regarding speaking English noh? Izz that, they tend to... **fear English itself, or they get to intimidated by it.**"* (Transcript 4, lines 78-81)

*"Ah experiences a lot particularly, in the attitude of the students. When we say, when **they hear about English, they feel awk, they felt awkward, they are afraid to speak the language, they are afraid to criticized**, that was I've noticed when I teach English."* (Transcript 5, lines 68-72)

The responses showed that there are different experiences about the attitudes of the students towards speaking the language. Teachers found out that students are afraid to speak English in front of their classmates. Jones (2004) defines this phenomenon in a language learning situation as a fear provoked when the learner is asked to speak the second or foreign language in public, with a risk of social embarrassment. Oxford (1990), Jones (2004), and Turula (2004) conclude that anxiety has a negative effect on language learning. Fears, nervousness, insecurity, and lack of self-confidence are related to language anxiety.

Theme 2: Poor English Speaking Skills

One participant shared her experience, stating that the students' dialect accent is one of the reasons why they find it difficult to speak English. This is stated in the transcript below:

*"At first, they find it **difficulties since it's not their mother tongue**. But, I'm always ah... imposed to them that the more... they practice; the more... they will learn the language."* (Transcript 2, lines 65-68)

The response above showed that students find English speaking difficult to acquire because of their mother tongue. For the betterment of their understanding, the students' participation in the class is that they always use their mother tongue instead of using a second language to express their thoughts and ideas to their peers. English is one of the most important languages that they must learn. Many students express their inability, and in some cases, admit their failure, to learn to speak a second or foreign language. These learners may be good at learning other skills, but when it comes to learning to speak another language, they claim to have a "mental block" against it (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Theme 3: The Effect of Social Media

One participant stated that students nowadays are always using social media and they don't know how to read books, which leads to a lack of reading comprehension. This is stated in the transcript below:

"Mostly, the student cannot speak the language well, because of this... new generation that they don't know how to read the books, and... they... nearly, focus on what's the information in the Facebook and other media and, social media." (Transcript 3, lines 64-68)

The response above showed that in the twenty-first century, younger generations have access to an almost infinite amount of knowledge, because of all the information technology they are using. The teachers are more knowledgeable and they have an abundance of facts stored in their brains. Authoritative responses would be rejected most often because they are less plausible. Social media, on the other hand, has a negative impact on students' English. On social media, there is a new tendency that may jeopardize people's literacy abilities and skills because of the usage of abbreviations and unfamiliar lingo in writing, students (Craig, 2003). With the usage of Facebook, negative social promotion and negative conduct may arise. Furthermore, according to Swan (2017), users of social media have claimed detrimental effects on their lives grammar and spelling skills of students.

Teachers' Challenges towards Students' Attitude in Speaking the Language

Teachers' Challenges towards Students' Attitude in Speaking the Language	Description
Poor grammar in English sentences construction	Students are stuttered and lack of English structure. Limited of learning in pronunciation, articulation, crafting sentences, and vocabulary.
Discouragement caused by unfair judgment	Accent can cause discouragement that will lead the student in lack of participation in the class.

Use of jokes to skip English recitation.

Students used jokes to excuse themselves from recitation.

Theme 1: Poor Grammar in English Sentence Construction

The participants' shared stories about their challenges with students' attitudes toward speaking the language were fascinating. They were challenged as English teachers to go back to the basics. The teachers found out the poor sentence construction and grammatical errors of the students. Teachers were also questioned about why students struggle with English construction because of their own errors and flaws as English teachers. These are stated in the transcripts below:

"The use of grammar, they are afraid to commit mistakes." (Transcript 2, lines 88-89)

"What issues? Sometimes, they don't know how to pronounce the words, they don't know how to ah... they all don't know how to articulate the words, they don't know how to... put... together the words. Ah I don't, don't know how to ano." (Transcript 3, lines 96-100)

"Actually, they're a lot and some of them stuttering ahm...the crafting of sentences and then the lacking of vocab. Yes." (Transcript 4, lines 124-126)

Some students' abilities have weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary, and some other writing skills that should be possessed. In fact, based on the teachers' challenges, the students continue to struggle with sentence construction and grammar. There are some students who struggle with writing, vocabulary and grammar, as well as a lack of written exercises and ideas, can all have an impact on English. According to Sulasti (2003), as cited by Pratiwi (2012), the most common issues they face are how to write, what to write, a lack of vocabulary words, and structural incompetence.

Theme 2: Discouragement caused by Unfair Judgment

According to Misati (2009), English is the hardest language to learn, and students may be deterred from working hard, resulting in poor marks. Their positive view of English as one of the most important languages, on the other hand, will motivate students to work hard and improve their performance. This is stated in the transcript below:

"Yes, you know that the students will mishear you something or you will mispronounce even you as a teacher, for example then they will laugh noh? I was, I encountered that one ah... someone in my class way back in 2019, noh? That particular student of mine used to have this mannerism "uhh" (excessive use of filler words). So, with that noh? The student got discouragement, then I used to talk to him that ahm... (Transcript 1, lines 175-193)

Students aim to be able to communicate fluently in English. Teachers describe their students' responses to speaking assignments in EFL classes as "not excellent,"

despite their eagerness to participate. This could be due to a variety of factors. To protect themselves from being laughed at, they are reluctant to speak. So, they rotate in a vicious circle. The less they speak, the less they improve their speaking skills and the more they are afraid of speaking.

Theme 3: Use of Jokes to Skip English Recitation

In this case, students use jokes to avoid English recitation in class, which leads to less participation in classroom activities. They feel silly speaking a language in which they know they are making mistakes. They talk about something else in their mother tongue since the topic/activity they are supposed to be talking about in English is dull and boring. This is stated in the transcript below:

*“Ahm, the issues that I’ve encountered ahm... **first is they don’t have self-confidence, they are afraid to speak the language. When they hear about English they will tell me that “Oh Ma’am my nose is bleeding” like that. Hahaha they are so afraid hehe.**”*
(Transcript 5, lines 107-111)

The findings of the study conducted by Jati et al., (2019), revealed that both internal and external factors contributed to students’ disruptive behavior in the English classroom. Internal factors such as boredom, worry, and a desire for attention contributed to the prevalence of disruptive behavior. In the English teaching-learning process in the classroom, weariness was the external element that caused the appearance of students’ disruptive behavior.

Teachers’ Coping Strategies toward Students’ Attitude in Speaking the Language

Teachers’ Coping Strategies toward Students’ Attitude in Speaking the Language	Description
Motivation and encouragement	The teachers engaged more on encouragement the students to speak and practice the target language and using the language is not horrible and it is the process of learning.
Providing opportunities	The teacher let the students to speak and practice the target language like read and socialized with their peers, and speak in front of the mirror and review.
Differentiated instructional activities	The teacher implementing different group activities such as; speaking tasks, CLT approach, and classroom activities in order for the students to become a better speaker.

Theme 1: Motivation and Encouragement

One of the best strategies that emerged during the interview with the participants is more on motivation and encouragement. The teachers always encourage their students and let them learn to speak the language. Teachers motivate the students to participate in any classroom activities like oral recitation to build self-confidence, and to make them self-motivated. These are stated in the transcripts below:

*"What led you to start looking for coping strategies. Okay. So... that's it! Noh? As what I'm saying that as a teacher noh? **We are helping our student** and we should be the one to think of a strategy noh? **That will help them, especially with the issues and concerns that they are facing, so...**" (Transcript 1, lines 279-284)*

*"I think... **more of encouragement, more on encourage, encouraging the students.**" (Transcript 2, lines 124-125)*

*"Ah by encouraging **them that, speaking language is not terrified, terrifying, it's not horrible.** Speaking language is a learning process that you will able to learn how does the language to be spoken." (Transcript 5, lines 158-161)*

Teachers' coping strategies are to motivate and encourage the students to speak and convince them that there is nothing wrong with speaking the language. Speaking English is a process of learning. Teachers always encouraged the students with words of encouragement to motivate them to become better speakers. Through this, they can help the students to be motivated and have the confidence to help them with their issues and concerns that they are facing. According to the findings, students learn English because they are most motivated by external motivations like life objectives, which normally become more effective and successful motivators with time. The majority of teachers agree that using instructional aides, multi-media, and the Internet may help pupils pay attention in class (Zhao, 2012).

Theme 2: Providing Opportunities

Three participants stated that providing opportunities to learn and practice English can enhance the speaking skills of students. Another effective strategy that emerged during the interview is to provide for the needs of the students in order to improve their English. The teachers let their students practice the language and review the lesson. Speaking in front of the mirror or self-talk is highly recommended by the teachers. These are stated in the transcripts below:

*"Okay. I, as **much as possible I let them to speak the target language so... I encouraged them that nothing is wrong in practicing** noh? And **practice makes perfect!** Okay. So. That's it." (Transcript 1, lines 262-265)*

*"I let them to, ano... as I've said earlier I let them read, **I let them do the conversation between, the peers their classmates, and speak themselves in front of the mirror, speak, speak to yourself in front of the mirror.** So, you can practice while speaking." (Transcript 3, lines 129-133)*

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"Yes... noh? And then if that is the problem, so I let them review, review the lessons grammar." (Transcript 2, lines 95-96)

It is their responsibility as ESL teachers not only to teach, but also to encourage our students to speak up and engage. They need to help them overcome their worries by creating a welcoming environment in which they can learn and feel at ease. Speaking is by far the most important skill needed when it comes to ESL learning. Speaking is everywhere in real life, and while learners may be able to avoid skills like reading and writing English, this is not the case with speaking.

Theme 3: Differentiated Instructional Activities

The English teachers are employing effective and adapted techniques and strategies in teaching English class. Among the most effective strategies that emerged are the uses of differentiated activities to enhance the students speaking skills. These are stated in the transcripts below:

"In my class? Ahm... they do reporting, they do, do role playing, they do... ahm... monologue, speech choirs, and we have a lot of groupings here, though, so they can communicate well as... a group." (Transcript 3, lines 137-140)

"You know what, I di, ah, one of the coping strategies that I did integrate into my teaching is actually, the CLT or so called Communicative Language Teaching. So, in this approach it aims ahm... preparing or arming the students to become better speakers of the English language" (Transcript 4, lines 158-170)

"Ahh we have ahm, poem reading, we have jazz chants, we have ahh role playing, what, as what you've said, then we also have... what we call that one? I forgot." (Transcript 5, lines 199-202)

Teachers' best coping strategies that will help the students to improve their speaking skills is to implement different instructional activities. This will help the students to enhance their skills and to socialize to others. The claim is supported by the concept of Philips (2015), the teacher can do following things to help their students to speak such as: a. Encourage students interacting, b: make speaking activities communicative, c: plan speaking activities carefully. Therefore investigating the lectures strategy is worth to research.

Conclusion

The research conducted in the parameters of the Municipality of Parang, BARMM, Philippines, in order to determine the diverse experiences of the English teachers in students' attitude in speaking the language. The purpose of this study was to investigate what are the experiences of teachers towards students' attitude in speaking the language. Most of the students are not really good in English and that should be given an action and remedies by the English Teachers.

Time for language practice and the number of students in the classroom are the important considerations. The most common causes of incapacity to speak English are fear, lack of confidence, and a lack of complete knowledge. They can't

communicate clearly in English and stumble when speaking. Students need to practice to overcome their problems. As much as possible, communicate in English. Students may make mistakes, which is fine. It will become fluent with practice.

Students require a long-term and hopeful investment in their lives, and it is reasonable to conclude that studying English is precisely what they require. English satisfies many of a student's needs without exception. All they have to do now is concentrate on learning English and putting it into practice as much as possible. We make innumerable mistakes and achieve multiple accomplishments during our school years, and in order to achieve those numerous accomplishments, a student must be committed to his or her objective, whether it is obtaining a decent job or having an exceptional command of the English language. Every student must put in a lot of effort to become an expert in some areas, but in the case of English, they only need to practice what they can do when talking to a friend.

Students should work on stuff like that; they get to learn on a continuous basis. Go ahead and link themselves with English by reading English books, watching English movies, conversing with others in English, and thinking in English. It's okay to make mistakes because they're unavoidable. Take anything away from it. However, they should not solely concentrate on fluency, as accuracy contributes to improved language learning. It's best if they have a broad vocabulary and understand the rules for using it. Accuracy equals good syntax, and accuracy equals fluency.

The findings of this study revealed the attitude of the students toward speaking the language. Students are afraid to speak, lack English application, and also revealed the teachers' coping strategies to resolve these problems. In order to create a program that would inspire and motivate pupils to improve their speaking skills and their academic performance.

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