

“I Speak Not”: Accounts of English Language Learners With Glossophobia

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Abstract

This qualitative research employed the phenomenological method of study to determine the experiences of English language learners in public speaking and their coping mechanisms to redress such experiences. The study utilized in-depth interviews to elicit responses from the participants. Colaizzi's data analysis method was used to analyze the data gathered. This study's participants were the ten selected and assessed Grade 12 students of a tertiary school located in Midsayap, North Cotabato. Results revealed that English language learners' public speaking anxiety stemmed from the fear of perception or negative evaluation, the influence of unpleasant experiences, and pressure from competitiveness. The participants used four coping mechanisms to cope with the anxiety and improve themselves in the process – remediation, positive thinking, teacher's positive attitude, and peer seeking. The researchers concluded that public speaking anxiety stems from fear of being judged, negative experiences, and pressure from the different environmental factors. However, certain anxious persons can use the abovementioned coping mechanisms to reduce or improve their speaking skills.

Keywords: English Language Learners; glossophobia; public speaking; speaking anxiety

Introduction

Language anxiety is observable among learners. Such anxiety is a specific anxiety rather than a trait anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Language anxiety is defined as the feeling of tension and apprehension associated with second language context, including speaking, listening, and learning (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994).

With specific reference to speaking, majority of the students experience glossophobia or speaking anxiety. Tse (2012) defined glossophobia as the feeling of panic related with physiological changes like elevated heart and breathing rates, rapid reactions, trembling of muscles and shoulder and neck area stiffness among others. It is the feeling of fear while speaking in front of others, often characterized as fear of speaking publicly or nervousness in communication.

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Most students have fear speaking before the public. Public speaking anxieties are easily identified by various noticeable physical and psychological indicators (Barlow, 2002). Studies reported that students who received low mid-term grades were the ones who also had high anxiety levels. 2017 reports say that students with high anxiety levels had lower levels of success while low anxiety levels received high levels of success measured by grammar tests. Researchers suggest that the higher level of anxiety a language learner has, the more learning and test performance seems to be effected negatively (Batumlu & Erden, 2007).

Further studies revealed that speaking English in the classroom causes apprehension among non-native learners which exhibits the development of their communication skills and language learning (Trang, 2012; Hashemi, 2011; Kruger, 2013). This also explains why making students speak in the target language is a challenge among teachers. The apprehension and pressure on students to perform well in the second language causes them 'anxiety' that is specific to the second language classroom.

One of the challenges which language teachers face nowadays is on managing the increasing anxiety of language learners. Anxious students feel a deep self-consciousness when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking the language in the presence of other people. They feel vulnerable as others may ridicule and make fun of and laugh at them.

As observed, a common scenario in an English classroom is that students get nervous whenever speaking in front of their classmates. They are afraid that they could not respond appropriately or correctly. Their peers would laugh at them if their speaking performance was poor. Though Filipinos are known as proficient in speaking the English language compared to those in other Asian countries, it is quite alarming that just recently, Filipinos have failed to keep the status. Dramatic decrease of competence in the English language skills can be observed. There is a big drop in the number of Filipinos who could speak and think in English.

In a tertiary school in Midsayap, North Cotabato, language teachers observed that there are students who are glossophobic and have the fear of using English language in speaking in front of an audience. These learners often experience anxiousness in public speaking. This gives them the negative effects to learning like inferiority, lack of confidence and withdrawal from performing speaking tasks. They cannot express themselves fully and fluently. One language teacher affirmed that students must be consciously aware and be motivated to improve his or her public speaking skills.

In the light of the foregoing claims, the researchers found out that in the Municipality of Midsayap, there were scanty researches conducted about glossophobia. This premise gave the researchers the strong purpose to conduct the research. It is focused on describing the experiences and coping mechanisms of English language learners with glossophobia. The participants were the selected students from a tertiary school in Midsayap. These students were frequently observed to be glossophobic by their English teachers.

The research is anchored with Altercasting Theory by Weinstein and Deutschberger (1963) and Language Expectancy Theory proposed by Burgoon (1995). Altercasting makes use of social role theory, whereby people tend to conform to social expectations. The goal of altercasting is to project an identity, to be assumed by others with whom one is in interaction, which is congruent with one's own goals.

Closely related to expectation is the Language Expectancy Theory (LET). In this

theory, breaking expectations positively results in a behavior change while not breaking expectations negatively results in no change or an opposite behavior change. Since speaking anxiety also deals with internal factors like emotions and attitude, LET encapsulates how students in this study feel anxiety when they are using the English language as a required medium in their speaking engagements (Burgoon, et al. (2002).

The findings of this qualitative inquiry would not only contribute to the existing literature but would also inspire English language teachers to design teaching strategies and interventions in oral communication to help learners with anxiety in public speaking tasks. In the same manner, the outcomes of this study would be of great help to glossophobic learners to improve or eliminate the fear in public speaking.

Methods

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the 10 selected and identified Senior High School students in a tertiary school in Midsayap, North Cotabato. These participants were enough to extract the necessary accounts of the existing phenomenon (Creswell, 2017). The criteria in choosing these student participants included their low-level oral performance results in English. These were also validated and verified by the school's registered guidance counselor.

Instruments

The researchers utilized a semi-structured interview guide to extract the data about the participants' experiences and coping mechanisms of public speaking anxiety. First part of the interview guide elicits the profile information of the student participants. Second part is the interview questions they needed to answer to identify their experiences and coping mechanisms.

Procedure

The researchers sought the approval of the selected students asking for their permission to be participants in the in-depth interview (IDI) of this study. Afterwards, the said interview was conducted. The IDI lasted for 30-40 minutes for each participants. Each participant shared a detailed experience in response to the questions asked.

This study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) assessment of truth in a qualitative approach. It included credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

The researchers were able to secure credibility by securing the data were accurate though the responses of the student participants. Dependability was achieved through describing research procedures in full details, allowing the permanency of the reproduction of data. Transferability was addressed through collection of the analyzed data which will be kept on an archive and will be made available when one needs them. Finally, the researchers achieved confirmability through results confirmation of related researches. They did a series of readings about speaking anxiety to ensure that the data are true and correct.

Data Analysis

Data were collected through IDI with the student participants. Each participant shared salient accounts of their public speaking experiences as well as their coping mechanisms to improve it. Colaizzi's (1978) distinctive seven step process were incorporated as they provide a rigorous analysis, with each step staying close to the data.

Steps included 1) Familiarization, 2) Identifying Significant Themes, 3) Formulating Meanings, 4) Clustering Themes, 5) Developing an exhaustive description, 6) Producing the fundamental structure and 7) Seeking verification of the fundamental structure. These steps were done to ensure accuracy of analysis.

The researchers familiarized themselves with the data by reading through all the participant accounts several times. Then, they identified all statements in the accounts that are of direct relevance to the phenomenon under investigation and they also identified meanings relevant to the phenomenon that arise from a careful consideration of the significant statements.

The researchers clustered the identified meanings into themes that are common across all accounts. They wrote a full and inclusive description of the phenomenon, incorporating all the themes produced and condensed the exhaustive description down to a short, dense statement that captures just those aspects deemed to be essential to the structure of the phenomenon. Finally, the researchers returned the fundamental structure statement to all participants to ask whether it captured their experience.

Results and Discussions

Experiences of English Language Learners with Glossophobia

The emergent themes which arose from the data shared by the student participants are as follows: (1) Fear of Perceptions/Negative Evaluation, (2) Influence of Undesirable Experience, (3) Pressure from Competitiveness.

Table 1: Themes on the Experiences of English language learners with Glossophobia

EXPERIENCES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES
Fear of Perception/Negative Evaluation	Students' fear is brought by the environment of the speaking classroom where they are consistently evaluated
Undesirable Experience	Numerous difficulties connected with speaking anxiety that learners came across with
Pressure from Competitiveness	Students' pressure that comes from thinking that other students are better than them.

Fear of Perception/Negative Evaluation

Fear of perception or negative evaluation is the worry over how one's action will be received by others in the social setting. It signifies apprehension over academic or personal evaluation on the bases of students' performance while using the target language. In using the target language in a speaking classroom, students may think that they would be evaluated by their teachers or their fellow students. Most of the participants of this study revealed that they fear

the perception or negative evaluation of their teachers and classmates. In fact, participant 1 recounted,

“The things or situations that makes me feel nervous in public speaking sir is like participating in class and mag perform sa task. Ano Sir kanang magtan aw sila sa akua Sir bago ko mag estorya dali lang ko makulbaan Sir ba baskin tan aw pa lang nila ginakulbaan nako kay gaisip ko sir na daw majudge and akong gina estorya” **The things or situations that make me feel nervous are participating in class and performing tasks. When my classmates look at me before I speak, I easily get nervous because I think that I am going to be judged. (P1, A1/S1-S2)**

The responses above showed that fear of being judged makes it hard for students to perform a speaking task. Kanar (2011) contended that when students fear being negatively evaluated, they may experience anxiety at the output stage. Extracts above show that students’ fear is brought by the environment of the speaking classroom where they are consistently evaluated. Fear comes from the negative judgment the speaker may receive.

Meanwhile, participant 3 recounted:

“Ahm, usually Sir kay kanang ano ang tan aw gud sang mga audience sa akua. Kanang tutok nila Sir ba mao ang makatriggler gud na hindi mag estorya sa atubangan nila kay murag feeling nako ginabantayan nila akong gina estorya” **Usually, the way my audience looks at me makes me feel nervous. I feel that they are so conscious of the words that I am going to utter. (P3, A1/S1-S2)**

Responses above clearly implied that there is a fear of perception from the audience. The participant anticipates for negative judgment of the audience. This clearly connects again with Kanar’s (2011) point that the anxiety at the latter stage can be experienced when the speaker allows the thought of being negatively evaluated by the audience to enter in his or her mind.

Another participant shared:

“So ang mga ano Sir kay ay ang self-consciousness po in front of large group. Then, others might judge me po.” **My self-consciousness in front of a large group makes me feel nervous and the fact that I might be judged by others. (P4, A1/S1-S2)**

It can be noted that a learner of English who experiences fear in public speaking worries about the audience’s feedback or perception. They become more self-conscious. Krashen (1981) claimed that “people with low self-esteem and too much self-consciousness worry about what their peers think; they are concerned with pleasing others.” Exaggerated self-consciousness somehow leads to one’s anxiety.

In the light of the above accounts of students, it can be deduced that several of them are worried of making mistake because of being evaluated by their teachers or fellow students. Riasati (2011) posited that “fear of negative judgment and being laughed at by other students” are major contributors to students’ speaking anxiety. One must note that those participants who expressed their worry about making mistakes and being controlled by everyone in the class experienced lack of concentration and the lack of motivation to continue with the speaking task.

Influence of Undesirable Experience

Learners have come across with numerous difficulties connected with speaking anxiety. Instances like unfriendly classmates, failed exams, or the teacher intimidating the class are the causes why glossophobic learners are being anxious during classes and give them less eagerness to speak. Students who had negative experience are not willing to participate in class discussions. In this study, several participants revealed that their anxiety of speaking originated from a negative or undesirable experience that they have encountered. This led them to avoiding the task whenever they are told to do so. For example,

“So naka-experience ko since Grade 3 mapaulawan in front of a teacher then gikataw an sa classmate tapos nagstart na ang bully then kato na pag mag time na na mag oral recitation, reporting daw wala nako gana maglakaw sa atubangan lalo nap ag ang teacher ang maghimo ato. Until now magtawag ang teacher daw dili ko magtindog dayun kay baka mangyari tong ato nga situation”. **When I was in Grade 3, I experienced being humiliated in front of the teacher and was bullied by my classmates, then that was the time that I am afraid to speak. Whenever there is recitation or reporting, I am afraid to go in front. Until now, when I am being called by a teacher, I do not immediately stand and speak. (P2, A2/S1-S2)**

Excerpts above showed that there is an existing bad experience that gave the learner a negative impression in doing public speaking task. Paradowski (2015) claimed that students perceive their language skills as inferior to those of their classmates which may also be the effect of feeling humiliated in the past by the teacher or other learners. Similarly, Burgoon (1995) in his language Expectancy Theory argues that the effect of the use of language from several sources greatly affects the learner’s skill in public speaking. This notion gives us the thought that the bad experience one has encountered may create a lasting negative impact.

Meanwhile, participants 4 and 10 shared;

“Sa mga past failures ko po Sir. May mga times talaga na may pagkakamali din po tapos ma conscious po ako sa grammar and body language ko and then comparing myself to others. Yung iba magaling magsalita, so ikaw ma nerbyos kung ikaw na ang tawagon sunod.” **It was from my past failures. I have committed mistakes many times that allowed me to be so conscious with my grammar and body language. I also compare myself to others. Others are good in speaking so when it is my turn to speak, I get hysterical. (P4, A2/S1-S3)**

“Ah dahil nahihiya ako Sir at hindi ako sanay magsalita sa maraming tao. Tong nagrecite ko tapos namali akong answer.” **When I committed an error in my answer, that was the start I became shy and not used to talk with other people. (P10, A2/S1)**

It can be gleaned from the responses above that past failures are also contributory to a learner’s speaking anxiety. This idea is supported by Paradowski’s (2015) contention that difficulties encountered during a language course may give an individual to avoid speaking tasks. Thus, it can be said that failures create a negative effect to a learner.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) claimed that negative experience gained during a language course may have a lasting impact on students who, having been made hostile to language learning, hold negative expectations towards their future classes. Results revealed that previous learning experiences increased the level of students’ public speaking anxiety as

they have recounted their undesirable experience that led them to have the less eagerness of speaking in class, and some of them felt that they are not self-assured in terms of their language capacity.

Pressure from Competitiveness

One main source of learners' nervousness when they speak English seems to be perceptions of their incompetency in speaking the target language. They are frustrated to speak in front of these students when they think other students are better than them. A learner who perceives himself or herself with low self-concept ability and tends to fear others are main causes or sources of anxiety in a speaking classroom. Data from the participants indicated that the pressure from the audience or other people makes learners get anxious of speaking, thereby leading them to comparing themselves to their fellow students. For example,

"Ano Sir kapag dili ko comfortable kung unsa akong I estorya ginakulbaan ko kapag daghan maminaw ug daghan bright sa palibot." **I am not comfortable to speak up when I know that there are many intellectual people listening to me. (P5, A1/S1)**

"For example Sir kanang recitation then ug maminaw gud Sir kay halimbawa those students gud Sir kay bagtik kaayo mag explain, feel ko mawalaan kog gana." **For example, when there is recitation and you have classmates who are good in explaining, I feel like I cannot speak. (P7, A1/S1)**

"Ang mga bagay na nararamdaman ko ay nauutal ako at nanginginig kung merong mga tao nakikinig sa akin na alam kong magagaling." **I feel nervous when there are intellectual people listening to me. (P9, A1/S1)**

"Kapag maraming tao na nanunuod or nakatingin sa akin sir." **I get nervous when there are people looking and listening at me. (P10, A1/S1)**

Responses above clearly show that learners get anxious if they have classmates who are more active and more intellectual that listen to them; they get so uncomfortable to speak. Horwitz, et al (1986) claimed that most of the students' speaking anxiety comes from their self-concept abilities. Based on the results, students indicated that they consider their speaking ability was poor compared to their fellow peers and fear being less competent than others. In the same manner, Weinstein and Deutschberger (1963) in their Altercasting Theory, contended that people tend to conform on people's pressure towards them.

It is revealed that most students would feel nervous when their peers performed better and when it is their time to perform, they would get so anxious. Falling short from one's own expectations can spell anxiety as well; students thought their speaking skills were weaker than their peers and they were looking down at them.

The three emergent themes found on this study have been commonly experienced by learners who fear public speaking especially when they use English as their medium of communication. Results revealed that their anxiety of speaking in front of other people stems from their fear of negative evaluation, encountered undesirable experiences and pressure from their peers. However, every glossophobic learner experiences a different kind of level of apprehension or fear and manifests it on their own way.

Coping Mechanisms to Improve Public Speaking

Lucas, et al. (2011) divulged that English language learners also equip themselves with strategies that would help them not only to learn the target language but also to cope with their speaking anxieties. Similarly, student participants in this study elicited means of coping with speaking anxiety. There were four emergent themes identified with regard to the coping mechanisms used by learners with glossophobia. These are 1) Remediation, 2) Positive Thinking, 3) Teacher's Positive Characteristic, and 4) Peer Seeking.

Table 2: Themes on Coping Mechanisms to Improve Public Speaking

COPING MECHANISMS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION BASED ON SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS
Remediation	Strategy used by the learners in rehearsing possible gestures and looks into how one would appear while speaking.
Positive Thinking	Consistently and constantly reminding oneself of positivism and thoughts that are uplifting and motivating.
Teacher's Positive Characteristic	Teacher's certain characteristics such as being friendly, humorous, encouraging and patient with students that most likely help learners with anxiety.
Peer Seeking	Glossophobic learner allows others to offer and build a communication with them.

Remediation

Remediation in this study is a strategy used by the learners in rehearsing possible gestures and looks into how one would appear while speaking. This is a coping strategy that most of the participants use before they get engaged in speaking performance. It delineates the students' self-reflection when engaged in speaking performances, which entails intrinsic correction, focus, positivity, and out-of-school activities.

When asked regarding the coping mechanisms they do to improve their speaking skills, participants 1 and 9 shared:

"Ano Sir kanang mag anay ko daw ipraktis ko gud anay Sir ang akong i estorya or something isipon ko anay bago ko mag estorya tapos mamangkot pud ko sa tao sir." **I practice and think first of what I am going to say before I speak. I also ask questions from others. (P1, A4/S1)**

"Kapag walang pasok Sir yang nagapunta ako sa harap ng salamin gud Sir tapos kinakausap ko ang sarili ko tapos parang nagaperform ako. Gina isip ko na maraming tao ang nakikinig sa akin." **If there is no class, I usually speak in front of a mirror and perform speaking tasks. I just imagine that there are people listening to me. (P9, A4/S1)**

Rehearsing the speech before delivering it is a way of reducing one's public speaking anxiety. This is supported by Phillips (2013) who said that rehearsing would enable someone to gauge effectiveness and make instant adjustments. This creates the notion that one can watch

for himself or herself in action and work on correcting incongruences.

Meanwhile, participant 2 expressed that:

“Since elementray mahilig gid ko mag himo sang poem or spoken poetry hantud karon ginahimo ko gyapon then gina perform ko sa atubangan sa manghod ko para ma reduce gamay akon nga kakulba.” **Since elementary, I am really fond of writing poems or spoken poerty and I usually perform it in front of my sibling to lessen the fear that I have. (P2, A4/S1)**

Responses above indicated that other learners utilize other skills to reduce their anxiety in speaking. In a similar notion, Philips (2013) said that one can be creative in addressing the anxiety he or she experiences. Other skills can be utilized to aid speaking anxiety. This can be in a form of writing or other non-speaking activities. This entails that learners who are glossophobic may use some skills to reduce the fear or anxiety that they have whenever they speak.

Another participant shared:

“Ano Sir kanang magreporting gud Sir, naga inhale-exhale ko before ko mag estorya. Naga praktis pud ko sa atubangan ni nanay.” **When there is reporting, I usually do inhaling and exhaling before I speak up. I also practice speaking in front of my mother. (P3, A4/S1-S2)**

The response above clearly revealed that learners can help themselves by being aware of their proper breathing when speaking tasks arise. Philips (2013) also contended that part of the remedial techniques anxious persons do is properly watching over their breathing activity. Proper breathing may also help one to be fully ready of combatting the speaking task being feared by an anxious learner. This can be done through properly inhaling and exhaling that relaxes the mind. One can say that anxious learners using English may give time to themselves by breathing properly before starting a speaking task.

By rehearsing, doing out-of-school activities and proper breathing technique, one can assess his or her readiness in speaking especially when words and body movements do not match. However, these activities would not give exactly what an audience sees but doing these can help one become aware of his posture, stance, body language, and gestures. This allows the participants to develop an attitude of preparing themselves before they face an audience.

Positive Thinking

Thinking positively is the ability of an individual to come up with thoughts that are favorable and good despite the circumstances he or she is facing. This strategy banks on the idea that one can improve through consistently and constantly reminding oneself of positivism, thoughts that are uplifting and motivating. A number of participants declared that they engage themselves in a more motivating thought so that they can overcome the fear they are experiencing. Lifting one's spirit is one way to eradicate the feeling of being anxious. In fact, participants 3, 4 and 10 shared:

“Imaginon ko nalang na comfortable ko sa ila mag estorya sir.” **I just imagine that I am comfortable talking to them (P3, A3/S1)**

“I think of something more positive such as I am giving 100% effort to talk to them. Gina isip ko rin po na I am not alone in this. There are persons na kagaya sa experience ko.” **I think of something more positive such as I am giving 100% effort when I talk to them. I always think that I am not alone in this world having this kind of situation. (P4, A3/S1-S2)**

“Normal lang na pakikipag communicate sa kanila kasi sanay na sila sa akin.” **I talk to them in a normal way like the way they know me. (P10, A3/S1)**

These responses confer that the manner of students’ treatment to speaking anxiety plays a larger role in improving their spoken English. Comparably, Gai and Yong (2010) reported that students’ personal efforts to improve themselves through applying positive thoughts could greatly improve spoken English level, which can be greatly caused by intrinsic motivation. Liu and Huang (2011) agree with this proposition upon documenting how intrinsic motivation boosts second language and interacts with self-confidence, speaking anxiety, and self-efficacy. Having said that, one can declare that positive thinking does not only help one to overcome fear but also gives one the way to improve one’s spoken English.

Teacher’s Positive Characteristic

Having teachers with certain characteristic such as being friendly, humorous, encouraging and patient with students is likely helping to reduce anxiety and encourage anxious students to participate in speaking activities. Several participants of this study have affirmed that when their teacher encourages them to speak up, it actually allows them to boost their self-confidence. Teachers play a vital role in the lives of the learners. The impact of how they deal with learners who have glossophobia manifests in the learner’s positive response when they are encouraged to do speaking tasks. Responses below clearly indicate that most of the students improve their public speaking when they have teachers who possess positive characteristic. In fact, participant 1 shared:

“Ano Sir, ahm, ginatawag ko sa participation sa class tapos dili ko ginapressure mag estorya ug English ng dapat mag answer dili pud ginapadali.” **My teacher always asks me to participate in class and does not give me pressure when I am answering especially when I speak in English. (P1, A5/S1)**

When the teacher recognizes an anxious learner and does not give any pressure in performing a speaking task, he or she actually helps reduce or improve public speaking. Young (1991) claimed that teacher’s support is very important in reducing a learner’s anxiety. So, one can may say that English teachers must create a positive teaching experience with the anxious learners by not giving them any pressure in doing the task.

Additionally, participants 3 and 7 shared:

Kanang ano gud Sir kunyare ng gitawag ko sa teacher Sir kanang mag-ingon ang teacher ug encouraging words.” **The teacher gives encouraging words when I am called to speak up. (P3, A5/S1)**

“Ahm, gina encourage ka nila na dili maintimidate sa mga tawo sa atubangan then dapat comforttable ka magestorya” **They encourage me not to get intimidated and be comfortable in speaking. (P7, A5/S1)**

Responses above show that learners are also helped with the teacher's positive encouragement. Young (1991) said that teacher's positive encouragement helps build a positive relationship between the students and their instructors. It can be noted that when a teacher gives his or her best effort by means of proper encouragement and motivation, learners with speaking anxiety are helped to improve the skill.

Meanwhile, participants 2 and 9 recounted:

"Ahm, ang teacher kay pag matagaan niya ka salig daw makahatag ug confidence daw dili napud ka maulaw kay syempre may salig ang teachers nakon. Pag ginaparecite ko sa teacher kay ginaparelay anay ko." **If the teacher has faith in you, it actually boosts your confidence. It allows you not to be afraid in speaking. When the teacher allows me to recite in class, he gets me relaxed before I speak. (P2, A5/S1-S2)**

"Sinasanay ako ng teacher ko makipag interact sa ibang tao ginatawag sa recitation and mag share ng ideas ko." **My teacher allows me to interact with other people and calls me to recite and share my ideas. (P9, A5/S1)**

Teachers who consistently involve anxious learners in speaking tasks help these students alleviate the fear in speaking. This was supported by Young (1991) who said that teachers need to let the learners get involved in tasks that are difficult for them to deal with. Anxious learners are given the opportunity to express ideas thereby leading them to lessen the anxiety and improve communication skill.

Peer Seeking

Learners of English do not rely solely on their ability especially when they are faced with speaking circumstances. Seeking help from other people helps them alleviate the fear they have. It allows them to improve when they have themselves get used to being with other people. One can do this by attending social gatherings and interacting with the people around. Additionally, when a glossophobic learner allows others to offer and build a communication with them, this makes them ease the anxiety they feel in speaking. In fact, participants 4 and 5 shared:

"Sometimes Sir I talk to someone who is more higher than me. Yung mga Top 1 po I approach them." **Sometimes, I talk to someone who is more active than me. I approach those who more intellectual. (P4, A4/S1-S2)**

"Ano Sir ug naa ko'y friend nga classmate sa iyaha nako iingon." **If I have a classmate who is also my friend, I usually share things with him or her. (P5, A5/S1-S2)**

It can be gleaned that the role of the peers is very vital to an anxious learner's improvement in public speaking. Oxford (1999) explained that a peer can provide much help to reduce fear and anxiety amongst anxious learners. This means that by seeking for someone's help, anxious learners can reduce anxiety when they speak. Meanwhile, participant 6 expressed:

"Ano Sir kanang involved ko sa mga church activities para masanay maghanap in public." **I get involved in church activities for me to get used to face people in public. (P6, A4/S1)**

Getting used to people around actually helps anxious learner to cope with anxiety as he or she is exposed to audience. Oxford (1999) also argued that when a person can get used to peers and eventually seeks help from them, that person is boosting his or her confidence. It can be deduced that learners can also gain confidence from getting used to people or peers.

Conclusion

Speaking is a fundamental productive skill that is frequently utilized in daily activities. However, studies have shown that speaking is a task being feared by a lot of students especially with the use of English as a medium of communication. English language learners with glossophobia are the ones affected with dilemmas they must face every time they have to engage in public speaking.

This phenomenological study explored the public speaking anxiety of students in a tertiary school in Midsayap, North Cotabato. Specifically, it determined the experiences of the English language learners with glossophobia and their coping mechanisms to improve public speaking.

In this study, English language learners' public speaking anxiety stemmed from fear of perception or negative evaluation, influence of undesirable experience and pressure from competitiveness as shared by the participants. On the other hand, four coping mechanisms were provided by the participants as their strategy to cope with their anxiety and improve themselves in the process. These strategies include remediation, teacher's positive characteristics, positive thinking and peer seeking. All these coping strategies help them develop productive speaking skills.

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