

Speaking Anxiety and Coping Strategies in Relation to the Oral Communication Performance of College Students

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1026EDU0178>

Received: 20 March 2026; Accepted: 25 March 2026; Published: 09 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety has been recognized as a significant factor affecting students' oral communication performance in academic settings. This study investigated the relationship between speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among college students at a state-funded higher education institution in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, during the 2025-2026 academic year. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 120 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected using adapted questionnaires and analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, and Regression Analysis. Findings revealed that students generally experienced high levels of speaking anxiety, particularly in communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Students were found to employ coping strategies overall at an effective level, with positive thinking rated highly effective, while preparation strategies, relaxation techniques, and avoidance/withdrawal were also effective. Despite experiencing high anxiety, students maintained good oral communication performance in fluency, coherence, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and confidence. No significant relationship was found between speaking anxiety and oral communication performance. Among coping strategies, avoidance/withdrawal demonstrated a significant negative relationship with oral communication performance. It emerged as a significant negative predictor, indicating that students who relied on avoidance behaviors performed lower in speaking tasks. The study recommends implementing targeted workshops, scaffolded speaking activities, structured guidance on coping strategies, and supportive classroom environments to enhance students' oral communication skills, reduce maladaptive coping behaviors, and build confidence in speaking.

Keywords: anxiety, avoidance, coping strategies, oral communication, speaking

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

In the current educational environment, a student's success is not only measured by written examinations but also by the ability to communicate ideas effectively. Oral communication has become an essential skill for both academic engagement and future career readiness. Yet many students struggle to perform well in oral tasks due to emotional and psychological barriers. Among these, speaking anxiety remains one of the most persistent challenges, often limiting students' willingness and confidence to use the language in front of others. Research has shown that this anxiety can stem from several sources, such as communication apprehension, fear of being judged negatively, or worry about test situations (Damayanti et al., 2017). When left unaddressed, these factors manifest as avoidance behaviors, nervousness, and hesitation, eventually hindering students' oral performance (Hakim et al., 2022).

Speaking anxiety remains a significant factor affecting oral language learners in recent studies, especially in the wake of remote and hybrid instruction modalities. Yu (2024) provided a systematic review of journal studies, which found that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is consistently linked to problems with speaking performance, particularly fluency and willingness to communicate, and that methodological advances (e.g., more careful delineation of anxiety subcomponents) have allowed more precise measurement of speaking-specific anxiety

(Yu, 2024). Han et al. (2022) similarly found that foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) negatively impacts academic success in higher education, and that students with higher anxiety report avoidance of oral tasks, reduced participation, and poorer speaking outcomes. Additionally, Flores (2024) conducted descriptive-correlational work in the Philippines among college students, showing that speaking anxiety correlates moderately with lower self-reported speaking performance; students reported that anxiety impaired lexical access, fluency, and interactional responsiveness.

Scholars have consistently observed that anxiety has a negative influence on oral communication performance, with high levels of fear and nervousness often linked to weaker speaking outcomes (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2020). However, studies also highlight that learners are not completely powerless against these challenges. By adopting coping strategies, such as preparation, positive self-talk, relaxation techniques, or seeking peer support, students can lessen the impact of anxiety on their learning. Effective use of these strategies not only reduces feelings of uneasiness but also builds confidence and encourages greater participation in oral tasks (Nurahman et al., 2023; Quvanch et al., 2024). Teachers likewise play an important role, as supportive classroom practices and positive reinforcement have been shown to create safer environments where students are more motivated to speak (Rafieyan & Yamanashi, 2016; Flores et al., 2024).

Coping with speaking anxiety remains a crucial aspect of developing communicative competence among language learners. Studies reveal that students adopt various strategies such as preparation, positive self-talk, and relaxation techniques to manage their anxiety before and during oral communication tasks. Tee et al. (2020) emphasized that university students commonly use self-coping mechanisms such as rehearsal, visualization, and mindfulness to regulate nervousness during public speaking. Similarly, Pabro-Maquidato (2021) found that learners rely on self-initiated strategies, such as self-encouragement and practice, to reduce fear and build confidence in speaking English. Saputra (2018) likewise noted that students who engage in continuous preparation and self-regulation demonstrate better control over their emotions and exhibit improved speaking performance. These findings underscore the importance of developing internal coping mechanisms that empower learners to confront anxiety proactively.

Beyond individual efforts, recent studies highlight the role of contextual and interpersonal coping strategies in alleviating speaking anxiety. Nurahman et al. (2023) discovered that students often depend on peer support and teacher reassurance to create a less threatening environment for oral communication. Flores et al. (2024) also reported that collaborative learning activities and teacher empathy significantly reduce anxiety by fostering a sense of belonging and emotional security. In a related study, Quvanch et al. (2024) found that coping strategies vary by cultural background and classroom dynamics, with students who receive consistent feedback and encouragement more likely to overcome fear and actively participate in oral communication tasks. Collectively, these studies suggest that both self-regulated and socially mediated coping mechanisms play vital roles in mitigating speaking anxiety and enhancing oral communication performance.

Oral communication performance, as recent work indicates, remains a multi-dimensional outcome affected by linguistic, fluency, and interactional features, and is measured via both subjective (rater-based) and objective (temporal, fluency) indicators. For example, Đorđević (2025) conducted a study in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) speaking using mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), evaluating rubrics for speaking tasks and finding that rubric dimension scores (fluency, pronunciation, interaction) correlate well with objective features such as speech length and pause frequency; this supports the validity and reliability of combining measures in oral performance assessment. Also, students who report lower speaking anxiety obtain higher scores on the speaking performance subscales of pronunciation, fluency, and organization (Flores, 2024). Similarly, Su (2021) highlighted that learners' oral performance is strongly influenced by their confidence and strategy use, underscoring the interconnected roles of self-perception and communicative competence in achieving effective oral communication.

Moreover, recent studies emphasize the importance of reliability and interrater agreement in oral assessments. When rubrics are well-defined and raters are trained, interrater reliability (via intraclass correlation) in speaking tasks under MALL is acceptable to good, even when recordings are made on students' smartphones in remote mode (Đorđević, 2025). Also, in investigating stress, anxiety, and coping strategies among higher education students in extreme contexts, measures of speaking competence (interaction, fluency, etc.) show that

performance metrics degrade under stress unless mitigated by coping or prior preparation (Simionescu et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have explored speaking anxiety and coping strategies separately, there remains a paucity of research examining their combined relationship with oral communication performance among college students. Previous findings have consistently emphasized the detrimental effects of speaking anxiety on learners' fluency, confidence, and linguistic output (Han et al., 2022; Yu, 2024; Flores, 2024). However, coping strategies have often been treated as peripheral factors or generalized psychological responses rather than as key variables that influence communicative competence in language-learning contexts. Furthermore, most existing studies have been conducted in Western or non-Southeast Asian settings, resulting in a limited understanding of how cultural and educational factors shape students' anxiety experiences and coping behaviors in the Philippine context. This gap highlights the need for a localized investigation that systematically examines the interrelationship between speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among Filipino college students.

This study is significant because it contributes both to theory and practice in the field of language education. From a theoretical perspective, it addresses a crucial research gap by examining speaking anxiety and coping strategies in relation to college students' oral communication performance. While prior studies have independently explored the effects of speaking anxiety and coping strategies on language learning, few have examined how these two factors are related and how their interaction influences students' oral communication performance. This study addresses that gap by integrating these affective and strategic variables within a single framework, thereby extending the understanding of how emotional and behavioral factors shape learners' oral proficiency. It contributes to the body of knowledge in second language acquisition and applied linguistics by offering a more holistic perspective on the role of both anxiety management and coping behavior in achieving effective oral communication outcomes.

On the practical side, the study provides valuable insights for educators, language practitioners, and curriculum developers. The findings can guide teachers in designing interventions that not only reduce students' speaking anxiety but also strengthen their repertoire of coping strategies, thereby improving their oral communication performance. For institutions, the results can inform policies for providing targeted support services, such as speaking workshops, counseling, or peer mentoring programs, that directly address anxiety and promote adaptive coping mechanisms. Students themselves stand to benefit, as the study emphasizes empowering learners with strategies to manage stress and improve confidence in oral communication tasks. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of equipping learners not only with linguistic knowledge but also with psychological tools for resilience and success in academic and professional communication contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Stephen Krashen (1982), the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984), and the Communicative Competence Theory by Dell Hymes (1972).

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) emphasizes the role of emotional variables, such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, in second-language acquisition. According to Krashen, when learners experience high anxiety, low self-confidence, or poor motivation, their affective filter rises, which prevents language input from being effectively processed. Conversely, when the affective filter is low, learners are more open to receiving and internalizing language input. In the context of this study, speaking anxiety can be viewed as a factor that raises the affective filter, reducing students' opportunities to perform effectively in oral communication. By recognizing this theory, the study acknowledges that emotional states, particularly anxiety, are central in shaping students' oral communication performance.

In this study, Krashen's theory was applied by examining speaking anxiety as a psychological barrier that raises students' affective filters, thereby limiting their ability to absorb, process, and produce language effectively. By identifying anxiety levels among learners, the study aims to reveal how emotional factors hinder oral communication performance and to determine whether coping strategies can lower the affective filter to foster

better communicative outcomes. In this sense, the theory directly informs the conceptualization of speaking anxiety as not merely an emotional state but a gatekeeper of language-learning success.

Several studies have utilized Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis to explain the role of anxiety and affect in language learning. For instance, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) highlighted how foreign language anxiety interferes with performance in oral communication tasks, while MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) demonstrated that learners with higher anxiety process language input less efficiently. More recent research by Liu and Jackson (2008) applied the theory to Chinese EFL learners, showing that anxiety significantly restricted students' willingness to communicate in English. These findings support the application of Krashen's framework in the current study to account for the negative effects of speaking anxiety on oral performance.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) provides another theoretical lens, focusing on how individuals respond to stressful situations. This model posits that coping is a process involving cognitive appraisal of stressors and the adoption of strategies to manage them, whether through problem-focused or emotion-focused approaches. Within the present study, speaking anxiety is considered a stressor in academic settings, while coping strategies serve as mechanisms that students employ to regulate their emotional responses. The theory highlights the importance of coping behaviors such as preparation, positive thinking, relaxation, and peer support, which can mitigate the negative effects of speaking anxiety and improve learners' communicative performance.

In this study, the model is applied by treating speaking anxiety as an academic stressor that students appraise and respond to through various coping strategies. The framework helps explain why some learners manage their anxiety effectively—through preparation, positive reframing, or seeking social support—while others struggle, leading to poorer oral communication performance. By adopting this model, the study positions coping strategies as mediators that can potentially reduce the harmful impact of speaking anxiety and improve learning outcomes.

Past studies have applied the Transactional Model in academic and language-learning contexts. Park and Adler (2003) demonstrated that students' coping responses to academic stress strongly predicted psychological well-being and academic performance. Similarly, Dewaele (2013) found that multilingual learners' coping strategies influenced how they managed foreign language anxiety during communication. More recently, Oxford (2016) emphasized that effective coping mechanisms, particularly emotion-focused strategies, were essential in regulating language learners' affective states. These studies provide evidence that Lazarus and Folkman's model is well-suited to analyzing coping strategies in relation to speaking anxiety.

Finally, the Communicative Competence Theory by Hymes (1972) underpins the concept of oral communication performance. Hymes proposed that language proficiency is not limited to grammatical accuracy but also includes sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies that allow effective communication in real-life contexts. This study draws on the theory to emphasize that oral communication performance is a multidimensional construct influenced by linguistic knowledge and psychological and social factors, such as anxiety and coping strategies. By integrating this perspective, the study situates oral performance within a broader communicative framework that accounts for both affective barriers and adaptive responses.

In this study, the theory is applied by broadening the understanding of oral communication performance beyond grammar and vocabulary, emphasizing the integration of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. Speaking anxiety is conceptualized as an obstacle that undermines communicative competence. At the same time, coping strategies are positioned as facilitators that can help students maintain fluency, coherence, and confidence in actual communicative tasks. Thus, Hymes' framework guides the study in assessing oral performance as a holistic construct influenced by both affective and strategic factors.

This theory has been widely applied in second language acquisition and communication studies. Canale and Swain (1980) expanded on Hymes' framework by integrating strategic competence, a construct that has since been used to assess oral proficiency in language testing. Bachman (1990) employed communicative competence as a foundation for measuring language ability in real-world contexts. More recently, Savignon (2002) and Celce-Murcia (2007) demonstrated the relevance of communicative competence in classroom-based speaking tasks, showing that learners' performance depends not only on language knowledge but also on their ability to manage

anxiety and employ strategies. These applications strengthen the rationale for using Hymes' theory in the present study.

Taken together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding how speaking anxiety (Krashen, 1982) and coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) shape college students' oral communication performance (Hymes, 1972). They collectively underscore the importance of addressing emotional barriers and promoting adaptive coping behaviors to enhance communicative competence in educational contexts.

Conceptual Framework

This study examined speaking anxiety and coping strategies as independent variables, with oral communication performance as the dependent variable.

Speaking Anxiety. Speaking anxiety is a psychological barrier that restricts students' ability to communicate effectively in academic contexts. According to Damayanti and Listyani (2020) and Sari (2017), learners often experience nervousness, apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation during oral tasks, limiting their willingness to participate. Similarly, Zuhri & Sakkir (2022) and Al Hakim (2024) noted that unmanaged anxiety leads to avoidance behaviors and hesitancy, resulting in weaker oral performance. Hasibuan & Irzawati (2020) further emphasized that high levels of speaking anxiety are directly linked to lower communicative outcomes. In this study, it is conceptualized as a negative psychological influence that hinders students' oral communication performance.

Communication Apprehension. Communication apprehension refers to the general fear or discomfort experienced when engaging in real or anticipated communicative situations, particularly in a second language. It is often manifested through avoidance of speaking tasks, reluctance to participate in class discussions, or physiological symptoms such as trembling and stuttering. Akkakoson (2016) found that communication apprehension significantly reduces students' participation in conversation classes, while Sari (2017) identified it as one of the most prevalent sources of speaking anxiety among language learners. Similarly, Damayanti and Listyani (2020) found that apprehension stemming from limited vocabulary and low self-confidence restricts learners' willingness to communicate, thereby impeding oral fluency and expression.

Oral Recitation Anxiety. Oral recitation anxiety pertains to the stress or nervousness that emerges during classroom speaking tasks, particularly when learners are asked to speak spontaneously or respond orally in front of peers and instructors. This form of anxiety often results in hesitations, disrupted speech flow, and incomplete responses, even when the learner possesses adequate preparation or knowledge. Sinaga et al. (2020) noted that recitation anxiety commonly stems from the fear of making mistakes in public speaking contexts, while Hasibuan & Irzawati (2020) reported that evaluative pressure during oral activities diminishes students' performance and confidence. Zuhri & Sakkir (2022) further emphasized that anxiety during oral recitation leads to avoidance tendencies, stammering, and reduced classroom participation, ultimately lowering oral communication performance.

Fear of Negative Evaluation. Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) refers to an individual's apprehension about being judged or criticized by others, including teachers and classmates. It is one of the most significant components of speaking anxiety as it directly influences learners' willingness to take linguistic risks, such as using unfamiliar vocabulary or complex grammatical structures. Damayanti and Listyani (2020) found that learners who fear negative feedback tend to withhold speech and minimize participation. Similarly, Sinaga et al. (2020) explained that FNE encourages risk-avoidant communication behavior, limiting the frequency and quality of oral output. Al Hakim (2024) affirmed that this construct is strongly associated with linguistic hesitation and diminished self-assurance, resulting in suboptimal oral communication performance.

Coping Strategies. Coping strategies represent the methods students employ to regulate the stress caused by speaking anxiety. Research indicates that preparation, positive self-talk, relaxation techniques, and peer support are among the most common approaches (Nurahman et al., 2023; Quvanch et al., 2024). Pabro-Maquidato (2021) highlighted that coping helps reduce distress, while Rafieyan and Yamanashi (2016) showed that supportive classroom practices enhance students' ability to manage their anxiety. Flores et al. (2024) also stressed that when

students adopt adaptive coping strategies, their participation and confidence in oral communication tasks significantly improve. In this study, coping strategies are treated as adaptive mechanisms that may counterbalance the negative effects of speaking anxiety and contribute positively to oral communication performance.

Preparation Strategies. Students often turn to preparation strategies such as rehearsing a speech, organizing ideas in advance, or anticipating possible questions. These practices have been shown in recent studies to help reduce anxiety before speaking tasks. For example, Martiningsih et al. (2024) found that most learners use relaxation and preparation strategies to overcome speaking anxiety. Similarly, Quvanch et al. (2024) found that preparation strategies were among the most common approaches to regulate stress caused by speaking anxiety. Additionally, Pabro-Maquidato (2021) highlighted that coping helps reduce distress, while Rafieyan and Yamanashi (2016) showed that supportive classroom practices enhance students' ability to manage their anxiety.

Positive Thinking and Relaxation Techniques. Combining positive thinking with relaxation techniques—for example, encouraging self-talk (“I can do this”), deep breathing, or pausing to calm down—serves to counter negative emotional responses and increase confidence. Martiningsih et al. (2024) found that most learners use relaxation and preparation strategies to overcome speaking anxiety. Similarly, Quvanch et al. (2024) found that preparation strategies were among the most common approaches to regulate stress caused by speaking anxiety. Additionally, Pabro-Maquidato (2021) highlighted that coping helps reduce distress, while Rafieyan and Yamanashi (2016) showed that supportive classroom practices enhance students' ability to manage their anxiety.

Avoidance or Withdrawal Strategies. Avoidance or withdrawal strategies—such as refusing to volunteer, staying silent in class, or intentionally reducing speaking time—are considered maladaptive. Research links these strategies to sustained anxiety and poorer communicative outcomes. Suratin (2025) observed that Thai learners employ various techniques to reduce speaking anxiety, including avoidance strategies. Kondo and Yang (2004) identified avoidance as a coping strategy for speaking anxiety. Similarly, Hofmann (2018) discussed how avoidance is typically considered a maladaptive behavioral response to excessive fear and anxiety, leading to the maintenance of anxiety disorders.

Oral Communication Performance. Oral communication performance refers to the ability to articulate ideas clearly, confidently, and effectively in English. Prior studies have consistently shown that anxiety and coping strategies jointly shape this performance. Tsai (2018) and Lira et al. (2021) demonstrated that interventions that combine coping techniques with communication training enhance learners' competence while reducing stress. Said and Weda (2018) similarly identified language anxiety as a major hindrance to oral competence, while Su (2021) observed that strategies such as rehearsal and feedback foster fluency and self-confidence. Building on these insights, this study regards oral communication performance as an outcome shaped by both the psychological constraint of speaking anxiety and the adaptive supports provided by coping strategies.

Fluency and Coherence. Fluency and coherence refer to the smoothness and logical flow of speech, which allow learners to express their ideas clearly and understandably. Research indicates that structured speaking practice, such as timed repetition and organized speech planning, can enhance both fluency and coherence in learners' oral performance. Martiningsih et al. (2024) emphasized that pre-speaking preparation and rehearsals improve fluency and help students maintain logical flow during oral tasks. Suratin (2025) highlighted that interventions combining planning and practice significantly reduce hesitation and promote coherent speech. Similarly, Kondo and Yang (2004) found that systematic rehearsal and structured speaking exercises are effective strategies for improving fluency and the organization of ideas in language learners.

Pronunciation and Clarity. Accurate articulation of phonemes, stress patterns, and intonation is essential to ensure that speech is intelligible to listeners. Research underscores the significance of these elements in effective communication. A study by Sosas (2021) found that students' challenges in mastering phonological rules and various sounds, including stress, intonation, and pitch, contributed to low speaking competency. Similarly, Leong & Ahmad (2017) emphasized that learners' lack of awareness of phonological rules and sounds can impede accurate English pronunciation. Furthermore, recent advancements in pronunciation instruction highlight the importance of integrating innovative approaches to enhance learners' clarity in spoken English (Panyathikul et al., 2025).

Grammar and Vocabulary Use. The appropriate selection of words and the correct application of syntactic rules are essential for conveying complex ideas clearly and accurately. Research shows that a well-developed vocabulary and mastery of grammar enable learners to express themselves effectively, minimizing errors that could impede comprehension. Wiliana (2025) noted that insufficient grammatical knowledge and limited vocabulary often lead to breakdowns in meaning during oral communication. Similarly, Akinbogun et al. (2021) emphasized that targeted grammar and vocabulary interventions improve learners' accuracy and fluency in spoken English. More recently, Liu and Chen (2023) highlighted the role of interactive, context-based activities in enhancing learners' syntactic competence and lexical range, resulting in clearer, more coherent speech.

Confidence and Delivery. A speaker's self-assurance and effective delivery are crucial for engaging audiences and communicating persuasively. Research indicates that repeated exposure to speaking tasks, scaffolded practice, and interactive activities significantly enhances learners' confidence, which in turn improves vocal projection, eye contact, and audience engagement. Purnami & Widiadnya (2024) found that project-based learning boosted students' communication confidence, while Aladini & Jalambo (2021) observed that dramatized CLIL activities promoted speaking skills and self-efficacy. Similarly, Purnami (2024) emphasized that public speaking engagements develop learners' confidence and delivery, and technology-assisted methods, such as self-video recordings, provide a supportive environment that fosters both confidence and effective communication in EFL learners.

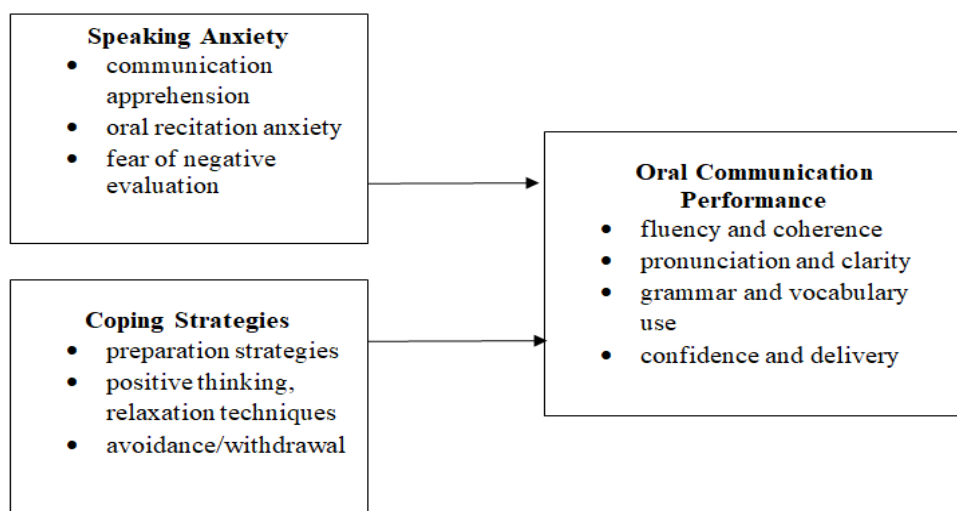


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the mediating role of coping strategies in relation between the speaking anxiety and oral communication performance of college students. It answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of speaking anxiety among students in terms of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by college students in terms of preparation strategies, positive thinking, relaxation techniques, and avoidance/withdrawal (reverse-coded)?
3. What is the level of oral communication performance among students in terms of fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use confidence and delivery?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the speaking anxiety and oral communication performance of college students?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the coping strategies and the oral communication performance of college students?

6. What is the predictor of oral communication performance of college students?

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the speaking anxiety and oral communication performance of college students.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between the coping strategies and the oral communication performance of college students.

Ho₃: There is no predictor of oral communication performance of college students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationships among speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among college students. The descriptive part of the design provided a clear picture of the students' current levels of anxiety, coping behaviors, and communication performance. At the same time, the correlational aspect determined the relationship between these variables. This approach does not establish cause-and-effect relationships but is effective in identifying the strength and direction of associations between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Schneider et al., 2023). By using this design, the study generated meaningful insights into how speaking anxiety and coping strategies relate to students' oral communication performance, offering evidence-based perspectives that can support interventions to improve their language learning experiences.

Setting

The study was conducted at a state-funded higher education institution in the municipality of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, serving as an academic hub for students from rural and agricultural communities in the province's northern region. The campus offers undergraduate degree programs in education, agriculture, information technology, and criminology under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Situated in an accessible area surrounded by public schools, it fosters collaboration in instruction and community extension activities. The student population is linguistically diverse, primarily composed of Cebuano and Subanen speakers, reflecting the region's multicultural nature. Most enrollees come from low- to middle-income families, benefiting from state subsidies and scholarship programs that promote access to affordable education. With its strong focus on instruction, research, and community engagement, the institution provides an ideal environment for examining the interplay between speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among college students.

Respondents

The respondents in the study were first-year college students enrolled in the School of Teacher Education (STE), the School of Criminal Justice Education (SOCJE), and the School of Agriculture, Forestry, and Environmental Studies (SAFES), as well as the teachers who handled their Understanding the Self subject. Each section typically consists of around 15 to 20 students. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure fair representation of each program. Only officially enrolled first-year students who voluntarily consent to participate, as well as teachers who are currently teaching the Understanding the Self subject to these students, will be included in the study.

Instruments

The following were the research instruments that were used in gathering the data:

A. *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*. Speaking anxiety was measured using a researcher-modified version of the FLCAS by Horwitz et al. (1986), contextualized to oral communication tasks in the

college setting. The instrument consists of 15 items categorized into communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Each statement is rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Very High) to 1 (Very Low). The FLCAS has been shown to have high internal consistency, with reported Cronbach’s alpha values above .90 (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2014; Mak, 2011). To ensure its reliability and contextual suitability, the modified questionnaire was pilot-tested among respondents who were not part of the main study.

In assessing the student’s speaking anxiety, a four-point Likert scale was utilized:

Scale	Responses	Continuum	Interpretation
4	Always (A)	3.26 – 4.00	Very High (VH)
3	Often (O)	2.51 – 3.25	High (H)
2	Sometimes (S)	1.76 – 2.50	Low (L)
1	Never (N)	1.00 – 1.75	Very Low (VL)

B. Brief COPE Inventory. Coping strategies were assessed using a modified version of the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997), refined to reflect coping behaviors specific to oral communication anxiety. The instrument contains 20 items distributed across four domains: preparation strategies, positive thinking, relaxation techniques, and avoidance or withdrawal strategies (reverse-coded). Responses were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Very High Extent) to 1 (Very Low Extent). Higher scores indicate frequent use of adaptive coping mechanisms. The Brief COPE has demonstrated strong validity and reliability across cultural and academic contexts (Kondo & Ling, 2004; Oxford, 1990; MacIntyre, 1999). To establish contextual reliability, the modified version was pilot-tested among non-respondent participants before formal use.

In assessing the student’s coping strategies, a four-point Likert scale was utilized:

Scale	Responses	Continuum	Interpretation
4	Always (A)	4.00 – 3.00	Highly Effective (HE)
3	Often (O)	2.99 – 2.00	Effective (E)
2	Sometimes (S)	1.99 – 1.00	Less Effective (LE)
1	Never (N)	1.00 – 0.99	Not Effective (NE)

C. Oral Communication Performance Rating Scale (Teacher Assessment). The respondents’ oral communication performance was evaluated using a researcher-developed Oral Communication Performance Rating Scale (Teacher Assessment). The instrument was adapted from the Oral Communication Competence Scale (Rubin, 1990) and guided by the assessment frameworks of O’Malley and Pierce (1996), Brown (2004), and Luoma (2004). It consists of 20 indicators categorized into four domains: fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery. Each indicator was rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), based on classroom observations conducted by teachers in oral communication classes. Higher ratings indicate stronger performance in oral communication tasks, particularly in academic contexts. To ensure the instrument’s validity and reliability, it was pilot-tested among teachers not part of the main study before full implementation.

In assessing the oral communication performance, a 4-point rubric was utilized:

Scale	Responses	Continuum	Interpretation
4	Very Good	4.00 – 3.00	Very Good
3	Good	2.99 – 2.00	Good

2	Fair	1.99 – 1.00	Fair
1	Poor	1.00 – 0.99	Poor

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought approval from the Graduate School of Misamis University, followed by formal permission from the Campus Director and the Program Chairs of the School of Teacher Education (STE), the School of Criminal Justice Education (SOCJE), and the School of Agriculture, Forestry, and Environmental Studies (SAFES). Upon securing the necessary authorization, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the modified instruments among non-respondent participants to ensure reliability and clarity. After validation, informed consent forms were distributed, and the purpose and procedures of the study were clearly explained to the respondents. Data collection was conducted on the school premises, where the researcher personally administered the questionnaires and immediately retrieved the completed questionnaires to ensure complete responses. The finalized instruments include: (1) the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure speaking anxiety, (2) the modified Brief COPE Inventory to assess coping strategies, and (3) the Oral Communication Performance Rating Scale (Teacher Assessment) to evaluate oral communication performance based on teacher observation. After data collection, all responses were tallied, encoded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to generate meaningful interpretations and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

The paper was submitted to the Ethics Committee (MUREC), during which the necessary forms were completed, including the Ethical Review Assessment form, the Informed Consent form, and the Technical Review of the Research Proposal. Respondents were fully informed about the study and confirmed their consent to be asked questions. Before data collection, the researcher obtained the Dean of the Graduate School's approval for the study. To ensure adherence to ethical research standards, participants provided informed consent before their involvement in the study. They were given a clear explanation of the study's purpose, potential benefits, and the safeguards in place to maintain their privacy and confidentiality. Identities were kept anonymous, and all responses will be treated with strict discretion. Participation was entirely voluntary, with the right to decline or withdraw at any stage without consequence. The researcher maintained neutrality throughout the process, avoiding bias, misinterpretation, or undue influence on participants' responses. All procedures and communications were carried out with transparency, fairness, and integrity.

Data Analysis

The following tools were used in the study:

Mean and Standard Deviations were used to determine the speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among students.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationships among speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among students.

Regression Analysis was used to examine the predictive power of speaking anxiety and coping strategies on oral communication performance among students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Speaking Anxiety

Table 1 presents the level of speaking anxiety among students in terms of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension received a high rating ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.68$). Similarly, oral recitation anxiety received a high rating ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.66$). Moreover,

fear of negative evaluation also received a high rating ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.92$). Overall, the findings indicate that the students' speaking anxiety is high ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.75$).

Oral recitation anxiety also received a high rating ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.66$), indicating that students experience substantial nervousness and stress during recitations, presentations, and oral assessments. The higher mean than that for communication apprehension suggests that performance-based speaking tasks provoke even greater anxiety among students. Oral recitation anxiety often arises from the pressure to perform accurately in front of peers and instructors, where mistakes are perceived as more visible and consequential. Studies on language anxiety show that speaking activities that involve public performance or evaluation, such as recitations and presentations, are among the most anxiety-inducing tasks for language learners (Lu, 2024). Suratin and Sribayak (2025) further noted that anxiety in recitation contexts can lead to cognitive interference, including mind blocks, hesitation, and difficulty retrieving appropriate language forms. Empirical evidence also indicates that high oral anxiety manifests in physical and behavioral symptoms such as trembling, rapid heartbeat, and speech breakdowns, which negatively affect oral performance (Wahyuni, 2025). Likewise, Zhang and Dong (2019) demonstrated a negative relationship between speaking anxiety and oral assessment outcomes, showing that students with higher anxiety levels tend to perform less effectively during oral evaluations.

Communication apprehension received a high rating ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.68$), indicating that students frequently experience fear or discomfort when required to communicate orally, particularly in classroom discussions and speaking tasks. The relatively high mean suggests that anxiety related to initiating or sustaining communication is a common experience among the respondents. At the same time, the moderate standard deviation reflects some variability in how strongly students experience this anxiety. Communication apprehension has been widely defined as fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others, especially in evaluative or formal contexts. Research consistently shows that students with high communication apprehension tend to avoid speaking opportunities, participate less in classroom interactions, and demonstrate reduced willingness to communicate in a second or foreign language (Amiri & Puteh, 2018). Similarly, Genzola (2022) reported that heightened communication apprehension limits students' oral engagement and discourages spontaneous participation, thereby restricting opportunities for language practice and skill development. Further supporting this, Nurhidayat et al. (2023) found that learners with elevated apprehension levels show significantly lower oral participation and classroom interaction, while Rahmatollahi and Khalili (2015) established that communication apprehension is associated with reduced speaking ability and reluctance to engage in oral activities.

Fear of negative evaluation was likewise rated high ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.92$), reflecting students' strong concern about being judged unfavorably by teachers or peers when speaking. The relatively larger standard deviation suggests greater individual differences in how students perceive and respond to evaluative situations. Fear of negative evaluation is a core component of foreign language anxiety and is characterized by heightened sensitivity to criticism, error correction, and peer judgment. Research indicates that learners who strongly fear negative evaluation often limit their participation in oral activities to avoid embarrassment or making mistakes in front of others (Mazidah, 2020). Studies involving EFL learners similarly report that fear of negative evaluation significantly contributes to speaking anxiety and reluctance to engage in classroom discussions, as students worry about appearing incompetent or being laughed at by peers (Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021). Moreover, Okyar (2023) emphasized that persistent fear of negative evaluation undermines learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, leading to avoidance behaviors and hindering long-term oral language development.

Overall, the high ratings across communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation indicate that students' speaking anxiety is high ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.75$). This suggests that speaking anxiety is a pervasive issue affecting students' participation in evaluative and performance-oriented speaking tasks and may limit opportunities for active oral engagement and language development.

These findings underscore the critical need to foster supportive and low-anxiety classroom environments that actively mitigate students' speaking anxiety. When learners experience high levels of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, or fear of negative evaluation, their participation in classroom discussions, presentations, and collaborative tasks is often inhibited, limiting opportunities for meaningful oral practice and skill development (Amiri & Puteh, 2018; Mazidah, 2020). Teachers play a pivotal role in reducing these anxieties

by providing encouraging and constructive feedback that emphasizes effort, progress, and communicative intent rather than focusing solely on linguistic accuracy or errors. In addition, gradual exposure to speaking tasks—such as progressing from pair discussions to small-group presentations and eventually to whole-class performances—allows students to build confidence incrementally while managing anxiety more effectively. Preparatory activities, including rehearsals, guided prompts, and scaffolded speaking exercises, further equip learners with strategies to organize ideas, anticipate challenges, and approach oral tasks with greater readiness (Nurhidayat et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2021).

Creating a non-threatening and psychologically safe classroom climate has broader implications beyond immediate speaking performance. Research suggests that such environments enhance learners’ intrinsic motivation, engagement, and willingness to take communicative risks—factors essential to developing communicative competence in a second language (Hoang & Wyatt, 2021). Moreover, supportive classroom conditions encourage students to actively employ adaptive coping strategies, such as positive thinking and preparation techniques, which help regulate anxiety and sustain oral participation over time (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). Ultimately, teaching approaches that prioritize emotional support, progressive skill-building, and learner confidence not only reduce speaking anxiety but also promote inclusive, participatory, and effective language learning experiences, enabling students to engage more fully in oral communication tasks and achieve their academic goals.

Table 1 Level of speaking anxiety among students

Strategies	M	SD	Remarks
Communication Apprehension	3.17	0.68	High
Oral Recitation Anxiety	3.24	0.66	High
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.08	0.92	High
Overall Speaking Anxiety	3.16	0.75	High

Legend: 3.25-4.0 – Very High (VH) 1.75-2.499 – Low (L)
2.50-3.24 – High (H) 1.0-1.74 – Very Low (VL)

Coping Strategies

Table 2 presents the effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by college students, including preparation strategies, positive thinking, relationship techniques, and avoidance/withdrawal. Preparation strategies were rated effective (M = 3.11, SD = 0.61). On the other hand, positive thinking was rated highly effective (M = 3.28, SD = 0.65). Furthermore, relation techniques were rated effective (M = 3.16, SD = 0.49). Meanwhile, avoidance/withdrawal was rated effective (M = 2.16, SD = 0.67). Overall, the respondents rated the coping strategies as effective (M = 2.93, SD = 0.61).

Positive thinking was rated highly effective (M = 3.28, SD = 0.65), indicating that students strongly rely on cognitive coping strategies such as self-encouragement and positive self-talk to manage speaking anxiety. This high rating implies that students actively regulate their emotions by reframing negative thoughts and maintaining an optimistic perspective when speaking. Consistent with this result, studies in second language learning have shown that positive emotional regulation strategies significantly reduce anxiety and promote active engagement in oral communication (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Research on speaking anxiety coping strategies also indicates that students who use positive thinking and self-affirmation—such as imagining successful performance and encouraging themselves—experience increased confidence and reduced nervousness during speaking tasks (Maulani, 2022). Additionally, studies examining self-talk in educational settings have found that positive self-talk enhances learners’ self-confidence and helps them focus on tasks rather than anxieties, which supports greater participation in speaking activities (Dimala et al., 2023).

Relaxation techniques were rated effective ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.49$), reflecting students' use of strategies such as deep breathing and calming practices to manage the physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety. This finding suggests that students are aware of the physiological effects of speaking anxiety and attempt to regulate them to maintain composure during oral tasks. Empirical evidence from studies investigating coping strategies for speaking anxiety shows that learners often use relaxation methods, including breathing exercises and other affective approaches, to help manage anxiety symptoms and support emotional regulation in oral communication contexts (Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). Studies have found that language learners commonly employ relaxation techniques, such as controlled breathing and calm, focused exercises, to regulate physiological symptoms, such as nervous tension and a rapid heartbeat, thereby reducing anxiety during speaking activities (Asterina et al., 2025). Research also indicates that deep relaxation practices help reduce stress responses and increase learners' comfort and confidence when presenting orally, enhancing emotional stability and readiness to speak (Afidawati et al., 2024).

Preparation strategies were rated effective ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.61$), indicating that students generally cope with speaking anxiety by preparing in advance through planning, rehearsal, and familiarization with speaking tasks. This suggests that students perceive preparation as a practical means of reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence when engaging in oral communication activities. Research suggests that preparatory behaviors help reduce uncertainty and enhance learners' perceived control, thereby lowering anxiety and improving oral performance (Pawlak et al., 2021). Studies on speaking anxiety have found that learners' thorough preparation—which includes organizing ideas, rehearsing content, and practicing responses—helps build confidence and reduces anxiety during classroom speaking tasks (Asterina et al., 2025). Similarly, research on English language learners reports that students who engage in preparation and rehearsal before oral performance experience increased familiarity with the material and greater self-assurance, which contributes to lower levels of speaking anxiety (Alhasan et al., 2024).

Avoidance/withdrawal was rated effective ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 0.67$), although it obtained the lowest mean among the coping strategies. This result indicates that while some students cope with speaking anxiety by limiting participation or withdrawing from anxiety-provoking situations, this strategy is used less frequently than more adaptive approaches. The lower rating suggests that students may recognize avoidance as a short-term coping mechanism that provides temporary relief but may hinder long-term oral communication development. Supporting this interpretation, avoidance or withdrawal strategies appear to help students manage speaking anxiety and perform better in oral communication tasks by supporting short-term engagement and confidence (Khajavy et al., 2021). Research on language anxiety shows that learners sometimes withdraw or avoid oral participation—such as staying silent, choosing not to volunteer, or minimizing their visibility during class—to reduce immediate anxiety, even though this behavior may limit long-term language development (Hajiyeva, 2024). Similarly, studies have reported that avoidance behaviors, such as skipping or escaping anxiety-provoking speaking situations, function as short-term coping mechanisms that can temporarily decrease anxiety but may also reduce opportunities for active practice and confidence building (Rizkiya & Pratolo, 2023).

Overall, the respondents rated the coping strategies as effective ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.61$), suggesting that college students employ a variety of approaches to manage speaking anxiety, including preparation, positive thinking, relaxation techniques, and selective avoidance. The diversity of strategies highlights that learners use both cognitive and behavioral methods to regulate their emotional responses during oral communication tasks (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Khajavy et al., 2021). From an instructional perspective, this underscores the importance of educators recognizing and supporting the range of strategies students naturally adopt, rather than imposing a single method for managing anxiety. For instance, teachers can provide structured opportunities for preparation, such as guided rehearsals, outlines, or practice prompts, while simultaneously encouraging positive self-talk and affirmations to boost learners' confidence (Alhasan et al., 2024; Maulani, 2022).

In addition, educators can integrate relaxation and stress management practices—including breathing exercises, mindfulness, or short calming routines—into classroom activities to help students regulate physiological symptoms of anxiety and maintain emotional composure during speaking tasks (Suratin & Sribayak, 2025; Afidawati et al., 2024). While avoidance or temporary withdrawal can serve as short-term coping mechanisms to reduce immediate stress, teachers should guide students to gradually re-engage in speaking opportunities to ensure long-term development of oral communication skills (Hajiyeva, 2024; Rizkiya & Pratolo, 2023).

By fostering a supportive, low-pressure classroom climate that validates students' efforts and encourages incremental skill-building, educators can help learners combine these strategies effectively. Such environments not only reduce the negative impact of speaking anxiety but also promote learners' autonomy, resilience, and willingness to take risks in oral communication. Ultimately, a balanced approach that recognizes the interplay of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional coping strategies can enhance students' overall oral performance, confidence, and readiness to participate in diverse speaking contexts.

Table 2 Level of Effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by college students

Strategies	M	SD	Remarks
Preparation Strategies	3.11	0.61	Effective
Positive Thinking	3.28	0.65	Highly Effective
Relaxation Techniques	3.16	0.49	Effective
Avoidance/Withdrawal	2.16	0.67	Effective
Overall Coping Strategies	2.93	0.61	Effective

Legend: 3.25-4.0 – Highly Effective 1.75-2.499 – Less Effective
2.50-3.24 – Effective 1.0-1.74 – Not Effective

Oral Communication Performance

Table 3 presents the oral communication performance among students in terms of fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery. Fluency and coherence were rated good (M = 2.80, SD = 0.44). Similarly, pronunciation and clarity were rated good (M = 2.86, SD = 0.43). In addition, grammar and vocabulary use were rated good (M = 2.78, SD = 0.43). Moreover, confidence and delivery were rated good (M = 3.00, SD = 0.47). Overall, the students' oral communication performance was rated good (M = 2.86, SD = 0.44).

Confidence and delivery scored 3.00 (SD = 0.47), suggesting that students approach speaking tasks with self-assurance and are willing to engage actively. This demonstrates learners' psychological readiness and resilience, which are important for maintaining performance during oral activities. Research on second language learning indicates that higher levels of self-confidence are significantly associated with better oral communication outcomes, as learners who feel more self-assured tend to participate more actively and handle communicative demands with fewer disruptions (Pham et al., 2021). Studies on self-confidence in speaking performance demonstrate that learners with stronger self-perceptions of their speaking ability are more likely to take risks in communication, show resilience in the face of errors, and maintain engagement in discussions, which collectively enhance their delivery and overall performance (Fadilah & Aminatun, 2025). Moreover, research indicates that self-confidence serves as a psychological enabler, reducing anxiety and fostering expressive participation; learners with higher confidence are often more enthusiastic about expressing ideas fluently and coping with communication breakdowns effectively (Hoang & Wyatt, 2021). Together, these findings suggest that students' performance in confidence and delivery reflects not only their linguistic skills but also their affective readiness, resilience, and willingness to participate actively in oral communication tasks. Pronunciation and clarity achieved a mean of 2.86 (SD = 0.43), reflecting students' ability to articulate sounds accurately and make their speech intelligible to listeners. This indicates that learners can communicate ideas clearly, which is essential for successful oral interactions. Such performance demonstrates that students can convey meaning clearly, a critical component of effective oral communication. Research in second language acquisition identifies pronunciation as a core aspect of oral performance because accurate articulation, stress, and prosody contribute to how easily listeners understand spoken messages, thus enhancing communicative effectiveness (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Pronunciation proficiency is closely linked to comprehensibility, defined as the listener's

perceived ease of understanding a speaker's utterance, and studies show that learners with improved pronunciation measures—such as clearer vowels, consonants, and rhythm—are judged as more comprehensible in oral tasks (Crowther et al., 2018). Furthermore, evidence suggests that pronunciation instruction targeting intelligibility and comprehensibility leads to measurable improvements in how well learners' speech is understood, even when their accents remain non-native, underscoring the practical importance of pronunciation clarity in successful communication (Saito, 2012). Collectively, these findings indicate that students' strong performance in pronunciation and clarity reflects not only technical accuracy but also meaningful contributions to effective oral communication.

Fluency and coherence received a mean score of 2.80 (SD = 0.44), indicating that students generally demonstrate smooth speech flow and logically organized ideas. This suggests that learners can sequence their thoughts effectively and use cohesive devices to help listeners follow their line of reasoning—a core dimension of effective oral communication. Fluency is the ability to speak with normal continuity, rate, and effort while linking ideas to form coherent, connected speech. Coherence refers to the logical sequencing of sentences and the use of cohesive devices that enhance comprehensibility. Research indicates that higher fluency and coherence are associated with clearer, more understandable speech, and that learners who experience fewer hesitations and employ connected discourse markers tend to convey ideas more effectively (Liu & Chen, 2020).

Furthermore, studies indicate that logical sequencing of ideas and the use of cohesive devices significantly enhance speech comprehensibility and coherence (Zhang & Li, 2022). Empirical evidence further shows that speaking performance characterized by smooth delivery, fewer filled pauses, appropriate pacing, and logically linked utterances is associated with stronger overall communicative competence, suggesting that learners' ability to organize thoughts and control breakdown fluency contributes substantially to effective oral performance (Albarqi, 2024).

Grammar and vocabulary use obtained a mean score of 2.78 (SD = 0.43), highlighting students' ability to apply appropriate language structures and select relevant lexical items during speaking tasks. This indicates that learners possess the linguistic tools necessary to form coherent sentences and express complex ideas. Such competence is fundamental to effective oral communication, as it allows speakers to convey intended meaning clearly and accurately. Research indicates that accurate grammar use supports learners in constructing meaningful, coherent sentences that convey complex ideas clearly, helping listeners grasp intended messages without ambiguity. At the same time, a sufficient lexical repertoire enables speakers to select precise words to express their thoughts effectively in spontaneous speech (Samaraweera, 2024). Empirical studies also show that stronger grammatical competence is positively correlated with better speaking performance, as learners who master syntactic structures are more capable of producing accurate, contextually appropriate utterances in oral tasks, thereby enhancing communicative clarity (Enobio & Palma, 2025). Furthermore, vocabulary knowledge—particularly productive vocabulary that speakers can readily use—plays a critical role in oral communication because it determines the range of concepts a learner can express; without an adequate vocabulary base, even grammatically correct sentences may fail to convey detailed meaning (Salada, 2024). Together, these findings indicate that students' performance in grammar and vocabulary use demonstrates not only their technical linguistic proficiency but also their ability to communicate ideas effectively in oral tasks.

Overall, the students' oral communication performance was rated good ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.44$), underscoring the critical importance of creating a supportive, confidence-building classroom environment to further optimize learners' speaking abilities. When learners feel psychologically safe and supported, they are more likely to take risks in speaking, participate actively, and engage in extended discourse, which are essential for developing fluency, coherence, and overall communicative competence (Liu & Chen, 2020; Zhang & Li, 2022). Teachers can enhance this environment by providing constructive, encouraging feedback that emphasizes effort, progress, and strategies for improvement rather than focusing solely on errors or negative evaluation, thereby reducing anxiety and fostering learners' willingness to speak (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Saito, 2012).

In addition, carefully structured speaking activities—such as scaffolded tasks that gradually increase in complexity or pressure—allow students to build confidence and practice new language forms in manageable steps, supporting both linguistic and affective development (Samaraweera, 2024; Enobio & Palma, 2025). Attention to pronunciation, clarity, grammar, and vocabulary use further helps learners communicate their ideas

effectively, as accurate articulation and precise word choice enhance comprehensibility and listener understanding (Crowther, Trofimovich, Saito, & Isaacs, 2018; Salada, 2024). Teachers can model effective oral communication, demonstrate connected discourse strategies, and provide opportunities for rehearsal to strengthen learners’ structural and expressive skills.

Finally, fostering a positive and encouraging classroom climate has long-term implications for learners’ motivation, resilience, and affective readiness in oral communication. Students who experience supportive environments are more likely to engage in peer interaction, self-regulate their speaking anxiety, and develop autonomy in language use, all of which contribute to sustained improvement in oral performance. Overall, an instructional approach that combines emotional support, structured practice, and linguistic guidance can enhance learners’ fluency, coherence, confidence, and comprehensive ability to participate effectively in oral communication tasks, ultimately improving their overall communicative competence in English.

Table 3 Oral Communication Performance Among Students

Strategies	M	SD	Remarks
Fluency and Coherence	2.80	0.44	Good
Pronunciation and Clarity	2.86	0.43	Good
Grammar and Vocabulary Use	2.78	0.43	Good
Confidence and Delivery	3.00	0.47	Good
Overall Communication Performance	2.86	0.44	Good

Legend: 3.25-4.0 – Very Good (VG) 1.75-2.499 – Fair (F)
2.50-3.24 – Good (G) 1.0-1.74 – Poor (P)

Significant Relationship Between the Speaking Anxiety and Oral Communication Performance of College Students

Table 4 presents the correlations between students’ speaking anxiety—including communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation—and their oral communication performance across fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery. The correlation coefficients (*r*) and associated *p*-values indicate that none of the speaking anxiety variables have a significant relationship with any of the oral communication performance indicators, as all *p*-values exceed 0.05.

Communication apprehension shows no significant relationship with any indicator of students’ oral communication performance. As presented in Table 4, communication apprehension has weak and non-significant correlations with fluency and coherence ($r = -0.143$, $p = 0.119$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.052$, $p = 0.570$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = -0.027$, $p = 0.769$), and confidence and delivery ($r = -0.073$, $p = 0.427$). These results indicate that students who experience anxiety when engaging in communication tasks do not necessarily exhibit lower oral communication performance. This suggests that communication apprehension may primarily affect students’ emotional state rather than their observable speaking ability. Supporting this finding, previous studies have shown that learners with high communication apprehension can still perform effectively when they engage in preparation, rehearsal, and self-regulation strategies (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020; Phillips, 2019). Research in EFL contexts further suggests that apprehensive learners often rely on compensatory strategies that allow them to sustain fluency and clarity despite experiencing anxiety (Kim & Kim, 2021; Horwitz, 2017).

Similarly, oral recitation anxiety was found to have no significant relationship with students’ oral communication performance. The data show weak correlations between oral recitation anxiety and fluency and coherence ($r = -0.043$, $p = 0.638$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.085$, $p = 0.354$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = 0.044$, $p = 0.633$), and confidence and delivery ($r = 0.007$, $p = 0.942$). All p -values exceed the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that anxiety experienced during recitations or oral presentations does not significantly influence speaking outcomes. This is consistent with prior research indicating that the impact of performance-related anxiety varies depending on individual coping mechanisms, prior practice, and classroom support (Li & Dewaele, 2022; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Structured speaking activities, gradual exposure to public speaking tasks, and positive reinforcement from teachers can enable learners to manage recitation anxiety effectively without it negatively influencing their actual performance (Asterina et al., 2025). Therefore, students’ high ratings of oral performance despite recitation anxiety suggest that supportive instructional strategies may mitigate the potentially adverse effects of anxiety on speaking outcomes.

Fear of negative evaluation also demonstrates no significant correlation with oral communication performance indicators. As reflected in Table 4, fear of negative evaluation has weak correlations with fluency and coherence ($r = 0.091$, $p = 0.322$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.083$, $p = 0.368$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = 0.000$, $p = 0.998$), and confidence and delivery ($r = 0.055$, $p = 0.551$). These findings suggest that concern about being judged by teachers or peers does not directly impair students’ ability to speak fluently, articulate clearly, use appropriate grammar and vocabulary, or deliver ideas confidently. Existing studies support the notion that fear of negative evaluation, although linked to emotional discomfort, does not automatically translate into reduced oral performance when learners are provided with scaffolding, constructive feedback, and repeated practice opportunities (Okyar, 2023; Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021). Additionally, research shows that learners may use avoidance, rehearsal, or positive self-talk strategies to cope with evaluative concerns, allowing them to perform adequately despite anxiety (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Overall, these findings suggest that while speaking anxiety is present among students, it does not inherently impede their oral communication performance. This emphasizes the importance of contextual and instructional factors in supporting learners. Teachers can create low-pressure and encouraging classroom environments, provide structured speaking tasks, offer constructive and positive feedback, and facilitate coping strategies that allow students to manage anxiety while maintaining performance (Pham et al., 2021; Hoang & Wyatt, 2021). Implementing such supportive measures ensures that students’ anxiety does not limit their participation, confidence, or ability to demonstrate oral communication skills, highlighting that affective support and strategic instruction can effectively buffer the potential negative impacts of speaking anxiety on performance.

Table 4 Significant Relationship Between Speaking Anxiety and Oral Communication Performance of College Students

Variables		Fluency and Coherence	Pronunciation and Clarity	Grammar and Vocabulary Use	Confidence and Delivery
Communication Apprehension	<i>R</i>	-0.143	0.052	-0.027	-0.073
	<i>P</i>	0.119	0.570	0.769	0.427
Oral Recitation Anxiety	<i>R</i>	-0.043	0.085	0.044	0.007
	<i>P</i>	0.638	0.354	0.633	0.942
Fear of Negative Evaluation	<i>R</i>	0.091	0.083	0.000	0.055
	<i>P</i>	0.322	0.368	0.998	0.551

Ho: There is no significant relationship between speaking anxiety and oral communication performance of college students

Legend: ** $p < 0.01$ Highly Significant * $p < 0.05$ Significant $p > 0.05$ Not significant

Significant Relationship Between Coping Strategies and Oral Communication Performance of College Students

Table 5 reveals the relationships between students' coping strategies and oral communication performance across fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery.

Preparation strategies show no significant relationship with any indicator of oral communication performance. As presented in Table 5, preparation strategies have weak and non-significant correlations with fluency and coherence ($r = 0.094$, $p = 0.309$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.079$, $p = 0.392$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = 0.010$, $p = 0.915$), and confidence and delivery ($r = 0.095$, $p = 0.300$). These results suggest that although students frequently prepare for speaking tasks through planning, rehearsal, and familiarization, such preparation does not directly translate into measurable differences in oral communication performance. This finding implies that preparation may primarily function as an anxiety-management strategy rather than a direct enhancer of speaking quality. Prior research indicates that preparatory behaviors reduce uncertainty and support learners' perceived control over speaking tasks (Pawlak et al., 2021; Asterina et al., 2025). However, the effectiveness of preparation in enhancing performance may depend on factors such as the quality of practice, task complexity, and individual differences in skill application (Alhasan et al., 2024). Thus, preparation may function more as an anxiety-management tool than as a direct predictor of oral communication performance.

Positive thinking likewise demonstrates no significant relationship with students' oral communication performance. The correlation results show negligible and non-significant relationships between positive thinking and fluency and coherence ($r = -0.009$, $p = 0.920$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.078$, $p = 0.399$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = -0.018$, $p = 0.842$), and confidence and delivery ($r = 0.057$, $p = 0.539$). These findings indicate that while students may use positive self-talk and self-encouragement to cope with speaking anxiety, these cognitive strategies do not directly influence their actual speaking performance. Research supports this outcome by suggesting that positive thinking primarily enhances emotional regulation, motivation, and willingness to communicate rather than immediately improving linguistic output (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Maulani, 2022). Consequently, positive thinking may act as a facilitating or mediating factor that supports engagement and persistence in speaking tasks without producing immediate, observable gains in fluency or accuracy.

Relation techniques also show no statistically significant relationship with any aspect of oral communication performance. As shown in Table 5, relation techniques demonstrate weak and non-significant correlations with fluency and coherence ($r = 0.106$, $p = 0.249$), pronunciation and clarity ($r = 0.175$, $p = 0.056$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = 0.149$, $p = 0.104$), and confidence and delivery ($r = 0.100$, $p = 0.278$). These results indicate that seeking social support, engaging in peer collaboration, or maintaining interpersonal connections does not directly influence students' oral communication performance. While relational coping strategies are known to reduce stress and promote emotional well-being, their effects appear to be indirect and highly context-dependent. Research suggests that relational coping can reduce stress and improve affective well-being (Dimala et al., 2023); however, its impact on specific speaking outcomes may be limited. Studies further show that social support contributes to learners' psychological resilience and engagement, indirectly benefiting performance by fostering motivation, emotional stability, and a sense of belonging in the classroom (Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). Consequently, relation techniques may primarily enhance students' overall classroom experience rather than directly determining the quality of their oral output.

Avoidance/withdrawal, in contrast, demonstrates a significant negative relationship with several indicators of oral communication performance. The data reveal a significant negative correlation between avoidance/withdrawal and fluency and coherence ($r = -0.274$, $p = 0.002$), grammar and vocabulary use ($r = -0.277$, $p = 0.002$), and confidence and delivery ($r = -0.206$, $p = 0.024$). Although its relationship with pronunciation and clarity is negative, it does not reach statistical significance ($r = -0.163$, $p = 0.074$). These findings indicate that students who cope with anxiety by withdrawing from speaking activities or limiting participation tend to exhibit lower effectiveness in organizing speech, applying appropriate language structures, and delivering ideas confidently. This aligns with research showing that avoidance-oriented coping reduces opportunities for practice and skill development, leading to stagnation or decline in oral communication

competence (Li et al., 2021; Khajavy et al., 2021). Moreover, Hajiyeva (2024) emphasizes that while avoidance may provide temporary emotional relief, persistent withdrawal undermines self-efficacy and long-term speaking proficiency. Thus, avoidance/withdrawal emerges as a maladaptive coping strategy that negatively affects oral communication performance.

These findings underscore the critical importance of addressing avoidance behaviors while encouraging proactive and constructive coping strategies in classroom settings. Educators can support students by gradually introducing speaking tasks, offering structured practice sessions, and facilitating skill-building exercises that foster active participation. Workshops focused on confidence-building, stress management, and effective communication strategies may help students adopt more effective coping mechanisms, thereby improving their oral communication performance and overall speaking competence. By promoting engagement-oriented coping strategies and mitigating avoidance tendencies, teachers can enhance students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in oral tasks, ensuring that coping mechanisms serve as enablers rather than barriers to performance.

Table 5 Significant Relationship Between Coping Strategies and Oral Communication Performance of College Students

Variables		Fluency and Coherence	Pronunciation and Clarity	Grammar and Vocabulary Use	Confidence and Delivery
Preparation Strategies	<i>R</i>	0.094	0.079	0.010	0.095
	<i>P</i>	0.309	0.392	0.915	0.300
Positive Thinking	<i>R</i>	-0.009	0.078	-0.018	0.057
	<i>P</i>	0.920	0.399	0.842	0.539
Relation techniques	<i>R</i>	0.106	0.175	0.149	0.100
	<i>P</i>	0.249	0.056	0.104	0.278
Avoidance/Withdrawal	<i>R</i>	-0.274**	-0.163	-0.277**	-0.206*
	<i>P</i>	0.002	0.074	0.002	0.024

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the between coping strategies and oral communication performance of college students

*Legend: **p<0.01 Highly Significant *p<0.05 Significant p>0.05 Not significant*

Predictor of Oral Communication Performance of College Students

The predictive relationship between students' coping strategies and their oral communication performance was examined using regression analysis to determine which coping mechanisms significantly influence speaking outcomes. The analysis focused on four coping constructs—Preparation Strategies, Positive Thinking, Relation Techniques, and Avoidance/Withdrawal—to identify their contribution to students' overall oral communication performance. The results reveal that not all coping strategies exert the same level of influence, with only one construct emerging as a significant predictor of speaking performance. The following discussion presents the findings by construct, highlighting each construct's role in shaping students' oral communication outcomes.

Avoidance/Withdrawal demonstrates a statistically significant negative relationship with students' oral communication performance. The regression analysis indicates that increased reliance on avoidance behaviors is associated with lower levels of overall oral communication performance ($\beta = -0.151, p = 0.005$). This suggests that students who cope with speaking anxiety by withdrawing from oral tasks or minimizing participation tend

to perform less effectively in speaking activities. Although Avoidance/Withdrawal explains only a small proportion of the variance in oral communication performance ($R^2 = 0.0644$), the model's significance ($F = 8.13$, $p = 0.005$) underscores its meaningful influence on students' speaking outcomes (Angel & Rebalde, 2025; Homer, 2016).

Analysis of the construct reveals that Avoidance/Withdrawal coping—manifested through reluctance to participate, temporary withdrawal from speaking activities, or minimizing engagement in anxiety-inducing tasks—negatively affects key oral communication components, including fluency, coherence, grammar, vocabulary use, and confidence. Research shows that avoidance limits opportunities for skill development and active practice, both of which are essential for building effective oral communication skills (Khajavy et al., 2021). Additionally, avoidance behaviors have been associated with lower self-efficacy and heightened speaking anxiety, further reducing students' willingness to engage in oral tasks (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020; Ahmad, 2022).

Preparation Strategies, Positive Thinking, and Relationship Techniques do not emerge as significant predictors of oral communication performance in the regression model. While these coping strategies may support anxiety management and emotional regulation, their direct contribution to measurable speaking performance appears limited. Preparation strategies, such as organizing ideas and rehearsing content, may enhance perceived readiness, but their effectiveness depends on task complexity, depth of practice, and individual learner differences (Pawlak et al., 2021; Alhasan et al., 2024). Positive Thinking and self-encouragement promote emotional stability and motivation; however, their effects on oral communication performance are often indirect rather than predictive of specific speaking outcomes (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Maulani, 2022).

Relational Techniques, including seeking peer support and maintaining interpersonal connections, primarily contribute to students' affective well-being rather than directly influencing speaking performance. While relational coping can reduce stress and improve emotional adjustment (Dimala et al., 2023), its impact on specific oral communication outcomes may be context-dependent. Social support has been shown to enhance learners' psychological resilience, engagement, and classroom comfort, which may indirectly foster participation and long-term development rather than immediately improving fluency, accuracy, or delivery (Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). Consequently, instructional techniques may strengthen students' overall learning experience without directly determining the quality of their oral communication.

The findings underscore the pedagogical implication that avoidance behaviors should be addressed proactively. Educators can promote active engagement and adaptive coping by providing structured speaking activities, gradual exposure to anxiety-provoking tasks, and opportunities for guided practice. Interventions such as public speaking workshops, stress management programs, peer mentoring, and supportive feedback can help students transition from avoidance to proactive engagement, enhancing fluency, coherence, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence (Khajavy et al., 2021; Ahmad, 2022; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020). Continuous monitoring of students' coping behaviors and oral performance is recommended to ensure that interventions are responsive, effective, and tailored to students' specific needs, ultimately fostering improved oral communication competence and confidence.

Table 6 Predictors of Oral communication performance of college students

Predictors	Coef (β)	SE Coef	t- value	p-value
(Constant)	3.186	0.1197	26.61	< .001
Avoidance/Withdrawal	-0.151	0.0529	-2.85	0.005
r^2	0.0644			
F value	8.13			
p-value	0.005			
Students' oral Communication Performance = 3.186-0.151* Avoidance/Withdrawal				

Ho: There is no predictor of oral communication performance of college students.

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was conducted to determine the speaking anxiety, coping strategies, and oral communication performance among college students in a state-funded higher education institution in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of speaking anxiety among students in terms of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation? (2) What is the level of effectiveness of the coping strategies employed by students in terms of preparation strategies, positive thinking, relaxation techniques, and avoidance/withdrawal (reverse-coded)? (3) What is the level of oral communication performance among students in terms of fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery? (4) Is there a significant relationship between speaking anxiety and oral communication performance? (5) Is there a significant relationship between coping strategies and oral communication performance? (6) What are the predictors of oral communication performance among students?

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design. A total of 120 respondents were chosen through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using adapted research questionnaires and analyzed using means, standard deviations, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, and regression analysis.

Findings

The following were the findings of the study:

1. The students' levels of speaking anxiety in terms of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation were high.
2. The coping strategies students commonly employ were rated effective overall, with positive thinking rated highly effective and preparation strategies, relaxation techniques, and avoidance/withdrawal rated effective.
3. The students maintained good oral communication performance in terms of fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery.
4. The relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their oral communication performance revealed no significant relationship. Communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation did not significantly influence fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary use, or confidence in oral tasks.
5. Among coping strategies, avoidance/withdrawal showed a significant negative relationship with students' oral communication performance in terms of fluency and coherence, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery. Preparation strategies, positive thinking, and relational techniques did not show a significant relationship with oral communication performance.
6. Avoidance/withdrawal is a significant negative predictor of students' oral communication performance.

CONCLUSION

The following are the conclusions of the study:

1. Students perceive a high level of speaking anxiety in terms of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This indicates that students experience considerable emotional and cognitive tension when engaging in oral communication tasks.
2. Students were found to employ coping strategies at an effective level, with positive thinking rated highly effective. This demonstrates that students actively utilize methods such as preparation, relaxation, and cognitive regulation to manage speaking anxiety.

3. Students maintained good oral communication performance in fluency and coherence, pronunciation and clarity, grammar and vocabulary use, and confidence and delivery. This suggests that despite experiencing speaking anxiety, students are generally able to perform competently in oral tasks.
4. Speaking anxiety does not significantly influence students' oral communication performance. While students may feel nervous or apprehensive, these emotions do not necessarily hinder their ability to speak fluently, articulate clearly, apply grammar and vocabulary accurately, or present ideas confidently.
5. Among coping strategies, avoidance/withdrawal negatively impacts students' oral communication performance, particularly in fluency, grammar, and vocabulary use, and confidence. Other coping strategies, such as preparation, positive thinking, and relational techniques, do not significantly affect performance, indicating that avoidance behaviors are maladaptive in oral communication contexts.
6. Avoidance/withdrawal is a significant negative predictor of students' oral communication performance, highlighting the importance of promoting active engagement and adaptive coping strategies to enhance speaking skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were the recommendations of the study:

1. The institution may implement targeted training sessions or workshops designed to reduce speaking anxiety, reflecting the finding that students experience high levels of communication apprehension, oral recitation anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Such programs could include guided speaking drills, stress-reduction techniques, relaxation exercises, and public speaking simulations tailored to oral communication tasks.
2. Teachers may incorporate gradual speaking activities in the classroom to support students in overcoming oral recitation anxiety and building confidence. Examples include small-group discussions, paired presentations, structured recitations, or scaffolded exposure to larger audiences, enabling students to engage progressively without feeling overwhelmed.
3. Students should be encouraged to actively employ effective coping strategies, such as preparation, positive self-talk, and relaxation techniques, in line with the finding that these strategies are generally effective in managing speaking anxiety. Structured guidance on applying these strategies can help improve fluency, coherence, clarity, and confidence during oral tasks.
4. Educators and institutions should provide programs and resources aimed at minimizing avoidance/withdrawal behaviors, which were found to negatively impact fluency, grammar, and vocabulary use, and confidence. Strategies may include mentoring programs, peer coaching, guided practice sessions, and supportive feedback to help students engage actively in speaking activities.
5. Teachers may create a supportive and low-anxiety classroom climate, as suggested by the study's conclusion that speaking anxiety does not directly reduce performance when students feel supported. Constructive feedback, collaborative activities, and acknowledgment of students' efforts can strengthen confidence and encourage participation in oral communication tasks.
6. Future researchers may explore additional factors affecting oral communication performance, such as personality traits, motivation, classroom participation, or technology-assisted speaking exercises. Understanding these variables can provide further insights into enhancing speaking performance and addressing underlying anxiety or avoidance behaviors.

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