

REVIEW ARTICLE

Speaking Anxiety and Communicative Competence in the Post-Pandemic Classroom: A Narrative Review

Reanne Leopardas^{1,*}

¹ Department of Education-Davao City Division, Philippines

*Corresponding author: reanne.leopardas@deped.gov.ph

Keywords: English, enjoyment, Philippines, recitation, willingness

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/F5G8H3J6K9>

Received: 04 June 2026

Accepted: 17 Aug 2026

Revised: 04 Aug 2026

Published: 27 Aug 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: The return to face-to-face schooling has restored opportunities for oral interaction, yet post-pandemic evidence suggests that secondary learners remain hesitant to recite, present, and speak spontaneously in English. This concern is consequential because oral participation is a learning process and assessed outcome in senior high school English. **Objective:** This narrative review examined how speaking anxiety relates to communicative competence and academic performance, and identified classroom conditions and language support approaches that can strengthen oral participation in post-pandemic senior high school settings. **Methods:** A structured narrative search covered peer-reviewed and official sources published mainly from 2019 to 2025. Searches combined terms for speaking anxiety, foreign language enjoyment, willingness to communicate, communicative competence, communicative language teaching, peer support, secondary education, COVID-19, and the Philippines. Twenty-seven sources met the review criteria and were synthesized according to the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles. **Results:** Across meta-analytic, correlational, intervention, and qualitative evidence, language anxiety showed a consistent negative association with achievement, willingness to communicate, and oral performance. Foreign language enjoyment, supportive teacher behavior, peer interaction, task-based communication, and low-risk digital speaking practice were associated with greater participation and stronger speaking outcomes. Philippine studies likewise documented substantial public speaking anxiety among Grade 11 learners, with fear of negative evaluation prominent. **Conclusion:** Post-pandemic speaking difficulty is best addressed as an affective and instructional problem rather than a deficit of knowledge alone. Senior high school English programs should combine graduated oral exposure, peer-supported rehearsal, communicative tasks, formative feedback, and psychologically safe assessment routines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Oral communication occupies a central place in secondary English education because learners must not only understand linguistic forms but also use them to explain ideas, respond to questions, negotiate meaning, present arguments, and participate in social and academic exchanges. In the Philippine senior high school curriculum, Oral Communication in Context explicitly requires learners to demonstrate communicative competence across speech situations, communication strategies, and types of speeches (Department of Education, 2019). These outcomes depend on more than grammar and vocabulary. They require sufficient linguistic resources, perceived competence, willingness to communicate, emotional regulation, and repeated opportunities to speak before peers and teachers. When anxiety suppresses participation, the classroom loses an important mechanism through which learners test language, receive feedback, automate oral production, and develop confidence.

Speaking anxiety is commonly expressed through communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, physiological arousal, avoidance, silence, overreliance on memorized scripts, and difficulty retrieving known language under social pressure. Contemporary evidence continues to show that anxiety is not a peripheral emotion. Zhang's (2019) meta-analysis of 55 independent samples involving more than 10,000 learners found a moderate negative relation between foreign language anxiety and performance.

Teimouri et al. (2019), across 105 independent samples from 23 countries, reported a similar negative association between second language anxiety and achievement. Using 99 effect sizes from 14,128 learners, Botes et al. (2020) further showed that foreign language classroom anxiety was negatively associated not only with general achievement but also with speaking, listening, reading, and writing outcomes. These convergent estimates position anxiety as a meaningful educational variable that can influence both participation and assessed performance.

The post-pandemic classroom adds a distinct layer to this problem. Emergency remote instruction reduced or altered spontaneous interaction in many language courses, changed expectations for turn-taking, and weakened social presence in some settings. Harsch et al. (2021) found that the abrupt move online created substantial interactional challenges linked to unclear roles, insufficient social presence, and inappropriate communication channels. Tao and Gao (2022) likewise summarized how teachers and learners had to reconstruct participation norms during COVID-19 disruptions. For adolescents who spent formative school years behind muted microphones, chat boxes, asynchronous tasks, or restricted face-to-face contact, the resumption of whole-class recitation and live presentations may represent not simply a return to normal instruction but a renewed performance demand. Hakim and Lintangari (2024) reported that secondary learners experienced discomfort with English speaking both during online learning and after the

return to offline instruction, which supports the need to examine the persistence rather than the temporary presence of speaking anxiety.

Philippine evidence makes the issue locally salient. Lungay (2023) examined 931 Grade 11 learners enrolled in Oral Communication in Context in Cagayan de Oro and found high public speaking anxiety across motivation, self-esteem, audience, and situational dimensions. Aricheta et al. (2024) likewise reported moderately high public speaking anxiety among Grade 11 students and identified fear of negative evaluation as a prominent cause. In a qualitative study of Filipino Grade 11 Humanities and Social Sciences learners, Tapado (2025) documented anxiety across recitations, presentations, and oral examinations, with peer support, preparation, and supportive classroom conditions appearing repeatedly in learners' coping accounts. Although these studies differ in design and measurement, they converge on an important classroom reality: students may possess ideas and content knowledge yet still avoid or underperform in English speaking tasks because the social and emotional cost of public performance feels high.

A growing positive psychology literature offers a complementary explanation for why some learners speak despite difficulty. Foreign Language Enjoyment refers to positive emotion that arises when learners experience challenge, interest, social connection, accomplishment, or appreciation of the teacher and classroom. Botes et al. (2022) synthesized 96 effect sizes from 28,166 learners and found that enjoyment was moderately and positively associated with willingness to communicate and achievement, while it was negatively associated with anxiety. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) showed among secondary learners that enjoyment was particularly sensitive to teacher-related conditions, including positive emotional atmosphere and target-language use. Lee (2022) likewise found classroom enjoyment to be a predictor of willingness to communicate across middle school, high school, and university cohorts. These studies suggest that anxiety reduction alone may be an incomplete pedagogical goal. Stronger oral participation may also require the deliberate construction of enjoyable, socially supportive, and meaningful opportunities to use English.

Willingness to communicate provides a useful bridge between emotion and observable language use. A learner may have adequate competence but still choose silence when anxiety, perceived evaluation, task difficulty, or social uncertainty is high. Zhou et al. (2023) found strong links between second language competence and willingness to communicate and showed that anxiety can alter this relationship. Lee et al. (2024) similarly demonstrated that both enjoyment and anxiety mediated the association between informal digital English learning and willingness to communicate among secondary and tertiary learners. At the classroom level, Li et al. (2025) found that the psychosocial environment related to willingness to communicate partly through enjoyment and anxiety. The implication is that speaking performance is shaped by an interaction among what learners know, how they feel about using that knowledge, and whether the classroom gives them a socially acceptable route into communication.

Communicative language teaching and related task-based approaches are therefore relevant not merely because they increase speaking time but because they can redistribute risk. Interaction in pairs and small groups allows learners to plan, rehearse, negotiate meaning, receive peer feedback, and experience successful communication before whole-class performance. Loewen and Sato (2018) reviewed the role of interaction in instructed second language acquisition and emphasized the value of input, negotiation, output, and feedback within meaningful communication. More recent syntheses of task-based speaking instruction have reported favorable effects on oral production, particularly when tasks include planning and repetition (Medina Fernandez, 2021). Collaborative tasks have also been examined as a response to speaking anxiety. Bozkurt and Aydin (2023) observed slight decreases in selected anxiety indicators after collaborative activities but found no significant overall difference between face-to-face and online conditions, while social support from teachers, friends, and classmates has shown positive relations with willingness to communicate and negative relations with anxiety (Kalsoom et al., 2020). These mechanisms are especially relevant after periods of disrupted interaction because they allow participation to be rebuilt progressively rather than demanded immediately at full public intensity.

Digital tools can further support this graduated return to oral participation when they supplement, rather than replace, authentic interaction. Bashori et al. (2021) found that automatic speech recognition based practice improved vocabulary, reduced speaking anxiety, and increased language enjoyment among 232 secondary EFL learners. Lee, Yeung, and Osburn (2024) reported

that different dimensions of enjoyment mediated the association between informal digital English learning and willingness to communicate among Hong Kong secondary students. Such findings do not imply that technology is intrinsically anxiety reducing. Rather, private or semi-private rehearsal, repeatable practice, immediate feedback, and control over pacing may create a lower-risk stage before live performance. This staged use of technology aligns with the need to rebuild confidence while preserving the fundamentally social nature of communicative competence.

Despite the breadth of research on language anxiety, enjoyment, willingness to communicate, and communicative instruction, these literatures are often discussed separately. Studies may quantify anxiety without explaining how teachers can redesign speaking routines; intervention studies may improve oral performance without connecting the effect to classroom emotion; and post-pandemic accounts may describe interactional disruption without linking it to senior high school oral assessment. The Philippine context also requires a synthesis that recognizes Oral Communication in Context as both a curricular requirement and a high-exposure setting for fear of negative evaluation. A narrative review is appropriate because the relevant evidence spans meta-analyses, correlational studies, quasi-experiments, qualitative studies, instructional research, and policy documents that cannot be reduced meaningfully to a single pooled effect.

Accordingly, this review had four objectives. First, it examined whether speaking and foreign language anxiety remain consequential for oral participation and academic performance in the post-pandemic classroom. Second, it synthesized evidence on the relation among anxiety, communicative competence, willingness to communicate, and Foreign Language Enjoyment. Third, it identified classroom practices associated with lower communication apprehension and stronger oral engagement, with particular attention to communicative language teaching, task-based practice, peer support, teacher rapport, and technology-assisted rehearsal. Fourth, it translated the evidence into a targeted language support framework that DepEd senior high school English teachers can adapt for recitation, oral presentation, and communicative performance tasks.

II. METHODS

Review Design and Scope

This study used a structured narrative review design to integrate heterogeneous evidence on speaking anxiety and oral communication in secondary and closely related English as a Foreign Language or English as a Second Language contexts. The review followed the quality domains proposed in the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Articles, which emphasizes a clear rationale, an explicit review aim, a transparent description of the literature search, appropriate referencing, scientific reasoning, and presentation of relevant endpoint data (Baethge et al., 2019). A narrative rather than a formal systematic review design was selected because the review questions crossed several constructs and evidence types: foreign language classroom anxiety, public speaking anxiety, Foreign Language Enjoyment, communicative competence, willingness to communicate, communicative language teaching, task-based instruction, peer support, digital oral practice, and post-pandemic interaction. The synthesis nevertheless used reproducible search terms, predefined eligibility rules, structured extraction, and an evidence matrix so that the basis of each thematic conclusion remained traceable.

Search Strategy

The literature search covered publications available through March 2026, with priority given to work published from January 2019 through December 2025. Searches were organized around four concept clusters. The first cluster captured affective barriers using combinations of speaking anxiety, public speaking anxiety, foreign language anxiety, classroom anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and post-pandemic speaking. The second cluster captured positive and motivational conditions using Foreign Language Enjoyment, willingness to communicate, perceived competence, self-confidence, teacher rapport, and classroom environment. The third cluster captured instructional responses using communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, peer interaction, collaborative learning, oral rehearsal, recitation, oral presentation, automatic

speech recognition, digital speaking practice, and formative feedback. The fourth cluster added population and context terms such as secondary school, senior high school, adolescent, Grade 11, Grade 12, English, EFL, ESL, Philippines, DepEd, COVID-19, and post-pandemic. Searches were conducted iteratively through Google Scholar and ERIC, with publisher-level verification through Elsevier ScienceDirect, SAGE Journals, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, Frontiers, and journal publisher sites; Philippine evidence was additionally traced through Philippine E-Journals and journal repositories, while curriculum evidence came from official Department of Education resources. Backward reference checks from meta-analyses and recent review articles were used to locate influential studies that remained directly relevant to the review questions.

Eligibility and Study Selection

Sources were eligible when they met at least one of four functions: they quantified the association between language anxiety and achievement or oral performance; examined enjoyment, willingness to communicate, perceived competence, or classroom environment as correlates of oral participation; evaluated an instructional approach designed to improve speaking or reduce anxiety; or provided directly relevant Philippine senior high school evidence or curricular guidance. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles with clear samples, measures, and analytic procedures. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews were retained because they provided the strongest aggregate estimates, while qualitative studies were retained when they clarified the lived experience of speaking anxiety and the social conditions that shape participation. Studies focused exclusively on unrelated clinical anxiety, first-language public speaking outside educational contexts, or language outcomes with no communicative component were excluded. Sources published before 2019 were used sparingly and only when they supplied a necessary methodological or theoretical foundation. Official DepEd curriculum material was included despite its earlier development because it defines the expected oral communication outcomes for Philippine senior high school learners.

Evidence Extraction and Narrative Synthesis

The initial search produced 214 potentially relevant records. After removal of 47 duplicates and clearly irrelevant items, 167 unique records underwent title and abstract screening. Sixty-one sources were reviewed in full text, and 27 met the final inclusion criteria. For each included source, an extraction matrix recorded publication year, country or educational setting, learner level, sample size when available, design, focal construct, instructional condition, primary outcome, and the direction and magnitude of reported relationships when the study provided effect estimates. Evidence was then grouped into five synthesis domains: persistence and profile of post-pandemic speaking anxiety; anxiety and academic or communicative performance; enjoyment and willingness to communicate; classroom social support and teacher-related conditions; and communicative, peer-supported, task-based, or technology-assisted responses. Findings were compared for convergence, divergence, population differences, and design strength. Meta-analytic findings were treated as the strongest evidence for broad associations, followed by large correlational studies, controlled or quasi-experimental interventions, and context-specific qualitative or descriptive studies.

Review Rigor

Several procedures were used to strengthen rigor. First, numerical claims in the synthesis were taken only from sources whose sample and principal findings could be verified from publisher, indexing, or full-text records. Second, the review distinguished association from causation: correlational evidence was not described as proof that anxiety causes poor performance, and intervention findings were interpreted in light of design limitations. Third, Philippine studies were used to establish contextual relevance rather than to represent all senior high school learners nationally. Fourth, the synthesis attended to the coexistence of positive and negative emotions rather than treating enjoyment as the simple absence of anxiety. Finally, the review was checked against the SANRA domains before manuscript preparation to ensure that the importance of the topic, aims, literature search, referencing, scientific reasoning, and endpoint data were stated explicitly.

III. RESULTS

Characteristics of the Included Evidence

The final evidence set contained 27 sources. The corpus included five meta-analytic or systematic evidence syntheses, eight correlational or structural-model studies, three intervention or quasi-experimental studies, three qualitative or mixed-method studies, three Philippine senior high school studies, four sources that directly examined pandemic, post-pandemic, or online interaction, three broad review or conceptual contributions, and one official Philippine curriculum source. These evidence categories were not mutually exclusive because several publications contributed to more than one synthesis domain. The evidence base included secondary or senior high school learners directly in multiple studies, while other sources involved university learners or mixed educational stages but addressed constructs that were directly relevant to oral participation. Sample sizes ranged from small qualitative samples to more than 28,000 participants in meta-analytic datasets.

Table 1
Evidence Profile of the Narrative Review

Evidence type	Number of sources	Typical learner/context	Primary contribution
Meta-analysis/systematic synthesis	5	International, mixed educational levels	Aggregate relations among anxiety, enjoyment, achievement, and willingness to communicate
Correlational/SEM	8	Secondary, mixed stage, and tertiary EFL/ESL	Relations among competence, anxiety, enjoyment, classroom environment, support, and willingness
Intervention/quasi-experimental	3	Secondary and tertiary EFL	Effects of ASR practice, collaborative tasks, games, and task-based speaking
Qualitative/mixed-method	3	Secondary and tertiary learners	Sources of fear, participation barriers, coping, and interactional conditions
Philippine SHS evidence	3	Grade 11 senior high school	Public speaking anxiety, fear of evaluation, recitation and presentation experiences
Pandemic/post-pandemic/online interaction	4	Language courses during and after COVID-19 disruption	Social presence, interaction, and speaking discomfort across modalities
Review/conceptual synthesis	3	EFL learners across contexts	Mechanisms linking anxiety, grit, and willingness to communicate
Official curriculum	1	Philippine senior high school	Required communicative competence and oral performance outcomes

Note. Counts are not mutually exclusive because some publications contributed to more than one evidence category. SEM = structural equation modeling; ASR = automatic speech recognition; SHS = senior high school.

Speaking Anxiety Persisted Across the Return to Face-to-Face Communication

Post-pandemic and Philippine secondary evidence showed continued discomfort with oral English after the restoration of face-to-face instruction. Hakim and Lintangari (2024) compared secondary learners' speaking anxiety during pandemic online learning and after the return to offline classes and reported that both conditions remained uncomfortable for students. In the Philippine setting, Lungay (2023) found high public speaking anxiety among 931 Grade 11 learners, with anxiety evident across motivation, self-esteem, audience, and situational dimensions. Aricheta et al. (2024) reported a moderately high anxiety level among Grade 11 learners and identified fear of negative evaluation as the most common source. Tapado (2025) documented the same core manifestations qualitatively among Filipino Grade 11 learners, including fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension across recitations, presentations, and oral examinations.

Across broader educational settings, public speaking fear centered on anticipated judgment, memory failure, visible nervousness, insufficient preparation, and the prospect of performing before an audience. Grieve et al. (2021) reported that oral presentation fears involved both the act of speaking and the social consequences learners anticipated from public errors. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020), in a secondary school sample, found that foreign language classroom anxiety was more stable across teachers than enjoyment,

which indicated that anxiety could persist even when teacher-related conditions changed. These findings described a post-pandemic classroom in which restored opportunities to speak did not automatically remove the affective barriers that had accumulated or persisted during disrupted schooling.

Anxiety Was Consistently Associated With Weaker Achievement, Participation, and Perceived Communicative Capacity

The strongest evidence came from meta-analysis. Zhang (2019) synthesized 55 independent samples and found an overall correlation of $r = -.34$ between foreign language anxiety and performance. Teimouri et al. (2019) analyzed 216 effect sizes from 105 independent samples and reported a mean relation of $r = -.36$ between second language anxiety and achievement. Botes et al. (2020) analyzed 99 effect sizes from 14,128 learners and found a moderate negative association between foreign language classroom anxiety and general academic achievement, including a general achievement estimate of approximately $r = -.39$. Competency-specific results in that review also showed negative relations for speaking, listening, reading, and writing outcomes.

Studies that examined willingness to communicate showed a parallel pattern. Kalsoom et al. (2020) reported that foreign language anxiety negatively predicted classroom willingness to communicate, while several sources of social support showed positive associations with willingness. Zhou et al. (2023) found strong links between second language competence and willingness to communicate and observed that foreign language anxiety moderated some competence-willingness relations. Li et al. (2025), in a large sample of 2,268 university learners, found significant relations among classroom environment, enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, and willingness to communicate; enjoyment showed the largest mediating effect in the environment-willingness relation, followed by anxiety and boredom. The combined findings showed that anxiety was associated with both assessed performance and the immediate behavioral readiness to use English.

Foreign Language Enjoyment and Supportive Relationships Accompanied Greater Willingness to Communicate

Positive-emotion evidence complemented the anxiety findings. Botes et al. (2022) analyzed 96 effect sizes from a total sample of 28,166 learners and found a moderate negative relation between Foreign Language Enjoyment and anxiety, together with moderate positive relations between enjoyment and willingness to communicate, academic achievement, and self-perceived achievement. Lee (2022), across 647 Korean middle school, high school, and university learners, found that classroom enjoyment predicted willingness to communicate in all cohorts. Lee et al. (2024), with 1,265 Korean learners that included 764 secondary students, reported that enjoyment and anxiety both mediated the relation between informal digital English learning and willingness to communicate, with enjoyment operating as the stronger mediator.

Teacher and peer variables showed additional positive associations. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) found that secondary learners' enjoyment varied with teacher-related conditions, including attitudes toward the teacher, classroom emotional atmosphere, and target-language use. Song et al. (2022), in a large EFL sample, reported favorable relations among teacher caring, teacher-student rapport, and willingness to communicate. Kalsoom et al. (2020) found that teacher support, best-friend support, and other-friend support contributed to willingness to communicate. Tapado (2025) identified peer support among the coping resources described by Filipino senior high school learners. Together, the evidence showed that oral participation was embedded in a social environment rather than determined solely by individual language ability.

Communicative, Peer-Supported, and Technology-Assisted Practice Was Associated With Stronger Oral Engagement

Instructional evidence favored repeated opportunities for meaningful oral use. Medina Fernandez (2021) synthesized 61 task-based language teaching studies and meta-analyzed 11 of them, reporting a medium-to-large overall effect on speaking outcomes and favorable patterns for task repetition and pre-task planning. Loewen and Sato (2018) summarized interaction research

Table 2
Selected Evidence Linking Anxiety, Enjoyment, and Oral Communication

Source	Context/sample	Design	Focal variables	Principal result
Zhang (2019)	55 independent samples; >10,000 learners	Meta-analysis	Foreign language anxiety, performance	Overall anxiety-performance relation $r = -.34$
Teimouri et al. (2019)	105 independent samples; $N = 19,933$	Meta-analysis	L2 anxiety, achievement	Mean anxiety-achievement relation $r = -.36$
Botes et al. (2020)	99 effect sizes; $N = 14,128$	Meta-analysis	FLCAS, academic achievement	Moderate negative relations across general and skill-specific achievement
Botes et al. (2022)	96 effect sizes; $N = 28,166$	Meta-analysis	Enjoyment, anxiety, WTC, achievement	Enjoyment negatively related to anxiety and positively related to WTC and achievement
Dewaele & Dewaele (2020)	40 London secondary learners	Within-learner comparison	Enjoyment, anxiety, teacher variables	Enjoyment varied more by teacher; positive emotional atmosphere supported enjoyment
Lee (2022)	647 Korean learners, including 323 high school	Correlational	Grit, enjoyment, WTC	Classroom enjoyment predicted WTC across educational cohorts
Lee et al. (2024)	1,265 Korean learners, 764 secondary	SEM	Digital learning, enjoyment, anxiety, WTC	Enjoyment and anxiety mediated digital learning-WTC association
Lee, Yeung, & Osburn (2024)	308 Hong Kong secondary learners	Mediation analysis	Digital learning, FLE, WTC	FLE dimensions mediated links with classroom WTC
Bashori et al. (2021)	232 Indonesian secondary learners	Quasi-experimental	ASR practice, anxiety, enjoyment	ASR groups showed lower anxiety and higher enjoyment than regular instruction
Li et al. (2025)	2,268 Chinese university learners	SEM	Environment, emotions, WTC	Enjoyment and anxiety mediated classroom environment-WTC relations
Kalsoom et al. (2020)	200 Pakistani EFL learners	Correlational/regression	Social support, anxiety, WTC	Anxiety predicted lower WTC; teacher and peer support contributed positively
Song et al. (2022)	Large Chinese EFL sample	Correlational/regression	Teacher caring, rapport, WTC	Teacher caring and rapport predicted WTC
Lungay (2023)	931 Philippine Grade 11 learners	Descriptive comparative	Public speaking anxiety	High anxiety across motivation, self-esteem, audience, and situation
Aricheta et al. (2024)	Philippine Grade 11 learners	Descriptive comparative	Public speaking anxiety, causes	Moderately high anxiety; fear of negative evaluation prominent
Tapado (2025)	10 Filipino Grade 11 HUMSS learners	Qualitative descriptive	Speaking anxiety, coping	Fear of evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension across oral tasks
Hakim & Lintangari (2024)	131 Grade 12 Indonesian learners	Quantitative comparison	Pandemic and post-pandemic speaking anxiety	Speaking discomfort remained in online and offline periods
Bozkurt & Aydin (2023)	34 foreign language learners	Pre-post experimental comparison	Collaborative learning, speaking anxiety	Slight decreases in selected anxiety indicators; no significant overall difference between face-to-face and online conditions
Medina Fernandez (2021)	61 TBLT studies; 11 meta-analyzed	Systematic synthesis/meta-analysis	Task-based speaking	Medium-to-large overall effect on speaking; planning and repetition favorable
Harsch et al. (2021)	898 students; 35 teachers in online language courses	Mixed methods	Interaction, social presence	Emergency online courses showed substantial interaction and social-presence challenges

Note. FLCAS = Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale; WTC = willingness to communicate; FLE = Foreign Language Enjoyment; SEM = structural equation modeling; ASR = automatic speech recognition; TBLT = task-based language teaching; HUMSS = Humanities and Social Sciences.

showing that meaningful input, negotiation, output, and feedback provide core learning opportunities in instructed second language acquisition. Bozkurt and Aydin (2023) examined collaborative speaking activities across face-to-face and online conditions. They reported slight decreases in selected anxiety indicators but no significant overall difference between the two learning environments after collaborative instruction.

Technology-assisted practice produced similar patterns when it created repeated, low-risk speaking opportunities. Bashori et al. (2021) assigned 232 Indonesian secondary learners to two automatic speech recognition intervention groups and a regular-instruction control group. Both technology-supported groups improved targeted vocabulary, reduced speaking anxiety, and increased language enjoyment relative to the control condition. Lee, Yeung, and Osburn (2024) found among 308 Hong Kong secondary learners that teacher appreciation, personal enjoyment, and social enjoyment mediated the association between informal digital English learning and willingness to communicate inside the classroom, while personal and social enjoyment mediated the association outside the classroom. Liu et al. (2021) also reported favorable effects of game-supported classroom activities on willingness to communicate.

Evidence Converged on a Graduated Rather Than Immediate Return to High-Stakes Speaking

Across the included evidence, approaches associated with stronger oral participation shared several observable features: lower initial audience exposure, repeated practice, opportunities to plan before speaking, peer or teacher support, meaningful communicative goals, and feedback that did not convert every error into a public evaluation event. The Philippine studies showed that evaluation, audience, and self-presentation were recurrent anxiety triggers. The intervention and classroom-environment studies showed favorable outcomes when learners could rehearse, collaborate, use technology for repeated practice, or interact within supportive teacher-student relationships.

The evidence also showed that enjoyment and anxiety could coexist. Botes et al. (2022) found a moderate negative association between the constructs rather than a perfect inverse relation. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) observed that teacher characteristics influenced enjoyment more strongly than anxiety, while Li et al. (2025) modeled enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom as distinct mediators of willingness to communicate. These findings indicated that classroom design could increase positive emotion and willingness even when some anxiety remained.

Table 3
Synthesis of Evidence by Review Objective

Review objective	Convergent finding	Evidence base	Observed classroom implication
1. Post-pandemic significance	Speaking anxiety remained evident after the return to face-to-face instruction and in Philippine SHS oral communication.	Hakim & Lintangari, 2024; Lungay, 2023; Aricheta et al., 2024; Tapado, 2025	Immediate high-stakes recitation can reproduce avoidance and fear of evaluation.
2. Anxiety, competence, and performance	Higher anxiety accompanied lower achievement, performance, and willingness to communicate.	Zhang, 2019; Teimouri et al., 2019; Botes et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2023	Affective barriers can suppress the expression of existing language knowledge.
3. Enjoyment and social environment	Enjoyment, teacher rapport, peer support, and positive classroom climate accompanied higher willingness to communicate.	Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Lee, 2022; Song et al., 2022; Li et al., 2025	Oral participation is sensitive to relational and emotional classroom conditions.
4. Instructional responses	Planning, repetition, communicative tasks, collaboration, and low-risk digital practice supported speaking and/or reduced anxiety.	Bashori et al., 2021; Medina Fernandez, 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Bozkurt & Aydin, 2023	Graduated exposure and meaningful rehearsal provide a practical route to stronger oral performance.

IV. DISCUSSION

The evidence indicates that post-pandemic speaking reluctance should not be interpreted simply as lack of effort, weak grammar, or inadequate vocabulary. Language anxiety has a reproducible negative relation with achievement across large bodies of research. Zhang (2019) and Teimouri et al. (2019) reported remarkably similar aggregate associations despite different datasets,

while Botes et al. (2020) extended the pattern across general achievement and individual language skills. The practical significance for senior high school English is that a learner can know the answer yet fail to display that knowledge under public speaking conditions. Anxiety can consume attentional resources, narrow the learner's focus toward threat, increase self-monitoring, and promote avoidance. In an assessment-heavy oral classroom, the resulting silence may then be misread as poor preparation or limited competence, which can create a cycle in which fewer speaking attempts produce fewer opportunities for successful practice.

The post-pandemic context can intensify that cycle because the social demands of speaking changed abruptly during emergency remote schooling. Harsch et al. (2021) showed that interactional quality in emergency online language courses was affected by weak social presence and uncertain participation roles. Tao and Gao (2022) similarly described how language instruction had to reconstruct interaction under rapidly changing conditions. When students later returned to physical classrooms, the requirement to speak before visible peers and teachers reintroduced immediacy, audience evaluation, turn pressure, and embodied exposure. Hakim and Lintangari (2024) are important in this respect because they found speaking discomfort both during online instruction and after the return to offline schooling. The pattern suggests continuity of anxiety across modalities rather than a problem tied exclusively to online learning.

Philippine senior high school findings reinforce this interpretation. Lungay's (2023) large Grade 11 sample showed high public speaking anxiety even within a subject designed explicitly around oral communication. Aricheta et al. (2024) identified fear of negative evaluation as a common reason for anxiety, while Tapado (2025) documented similar concerns across recitations, presentations, and oral examinations. These findings align closely with the social-evaluative core of language anxiety in the international literature. They also matter for DepEd implementation because Oral Communication in Context requires visible performance. If teachers rely heavily on cold-calling, one-shot graded speeches, immediate correction in front of classmates, or participation marks that reward only frequent volunteers, the assessment structure may magnify the very affective conditions that suppress the target competence.

A central finding of this review is that communicative competence and willingness to communicate should be treated as related but nonidentical outcomes. Zhou et al. (2023) showed that learners' perceived competence related strongly to willingness, but anxiety altered parts of that relationship. Li et al. (2025) likewise found that classroom environment reached willingness partly through emotion. Thus, stronger grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation instruction are necessary but may not be sufficient. Students also need a credible expectation that they can enter an interaction without humiliation, excessive correction, or impossible time pressure. This distinction explains why some linguistically capable students remain quiet and why less proficient learners can become active communicators when the social environment supports risk-taking.

Foreign Language Enjoyment provides an important positive counterpart. Botes et al. (2022) found that enjoyment was positively related to willingness to communicate and achievement, yet it was only moderately and negatively related to anxiety. The two emotions therefore should not be conceptualized as endpoints on a single continuum. A student can be nervous and still find a task interesting, socially rewarding, or personally meaningful. This distinction opens a more productive instructional goal: teachers do not have to eliminate anxiety before communication begins. They can increase the probability of speech by building enjoyable and successful communicative experiences while anxiety gradually becomes more manageable. Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) support this approach because enjoyment varied with teacher-related conditions even when anxiety remained more stable.

Teacher behavior is consequently part of the communicative environment, not merely a delivery variable. Song et al. (2022) found that teacher caring and teacher-student rapport predicted willingness to communicate, while Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) linked higher enjoyment with a more positive emotional atmosphere and favorable perceptions of the teacher. In practice, affect-aware communication teaching involves predictable turn structures, adequate wait time, respectful handling of errors, explicit permission to self-correct, and recognition of effort rather than only flawless performance. These practices do not lower academic standards. They separate the evaluation of communicative growth from avoidable social threat. A teacher can still assess clarity, organization, audience adaptation, and language accuracy while using a

process that gives learners preparation, rehearsal, and more than one opportunity to demonstrate improvement.

Peer support offers a second pathway because it changes the audience from a large evaluative group into a smaller collaborative resource. Kalsoom et al. (2020) found that teacher and friend support were associated with willingness to communicate, and Tapado (2025) identified peer support within Filipino learners' coping experiences. Collaborative tasks also allow distributed responsibility: students can test phrasing, hear alternative expressions, and normalize error before public performance. This is consistent with interaction research summarized by Loewen and Sato (2018), which emphasizes negotiation, output, and feedback as mechanisms of second language development. Peer work, however, should not be treated as automatically safe. Group composition, dominant classmates, teasing, unequal proficiency, and public comparison can reproduce anxiety. Teachers therefore need explicit norms for turn-taking, feedback, and confidentiality of rehearsal errors.

Communicative language teaching becomes most useful when it is operationalized as a sequence rather than as a general expectation to speak more. Task-based evidence supports this sequencing. Medina Fernandez (2021) found favorable effects for task repetition and pre-task planning, which are directly relevant to anxious learners because both reduce the cognitive and social unpredictability of oral production. A student who first plans content, rehearses with one partner, repeats the task with a small group, and only later addresses the class encounters a graduated increase in audience size and performance demand. Each stage preserves authentic communication but distributes risk across multiple attempts. For senior high school recitation, the same principle can be used through think time, pair response, small-group reporting, and voluntary or assigned whole-class sharing after rehearsal.

Technology can occupy a specific place in that sequence. Bashori et al. (2021) found that automatic speech recognition based practice reduced speaking anxiety and increased enjoyment among secondary learners. The likely instructional value lies in repeatability, privacy, and immediate feedback rather than in technology itself. Students can rehearse pronunciation, pacing, or a short response several times before exposure to a human audience. Lee, Yeung, and Osburn (2024) further showed that enjoyment linked informal digital English use with willingness to communicate among secondary learners. For DepEd classrooms with uneven connectivity or device access, the principle can be implemented with low-technology alternatives such as voice recording on shared devices, offline audio rehearsal, paired phone recording, or teacher-provided model clips. Digital practice should remain a bridge to live communication rather than a permanent substitute for it.

The evidence supports a targeted language support program built around five linked components. The first is affect-sensitive screening, in which teachers identify speaking situations that produce the highest apprehension, such as unprepared recitation, graded presentation, oral examination, or unfamiliar audience. The second is graduated oral exposure, which moves from private rehearsal to dyads, small groups, and whole-class performance. The third is peer-supported communicative practice, with stable norms for respectful feedback and balanced participation. The fourth is competence-focused scaffolding through planning frames, lexical banks, sentence starters, pronunciation support, and task repetition so that reduced anxiety is paired with actual language development. The fifth is formative performance assessment, in which learners receive descriptive feedback, opportunities to repeat tasks, and clear rubrics that separate content, organization, delivery, language control, and audience adaptation. This model is consistent with the observed relations among anxiety, enjoyment, willingness, support, and oral performance across the reviewed evidence.

Such a program should avoid the common mistake of converting anxiety support into avoidance. If highly anxious students are permanently excused from speaking, short-term relief can preserve long-term apprehension and reduce opportunities to build competence. Graduated exposure is different: the learner still speaks, but the task is sequenced so that demand increases after successful lower-risk attempts. The goal is not to make all speaking effortless. It is to make the challenge manageable enough that learners can access their linguistic resources and experience evidence of improvement. The positive psychology findings summarized by Botes et al. (2022) and the enjoyment results of Lee (2022) support this balance because growth in willingness can occur through positive classroom experiences rather than through anxiety elimination alone.

Assessment practices deserve particular attention because oral grades can either validate progress or amplify threat. A one-shot speech disproportionately captures the learner's state on a particular day and may confound communicative competence with performance anxiety. Repeated short speaking samples, recorded rehearsal, peer response, and teacher conferences can provide a more stable picture of competence. Rubrics should reward communicative effectiveness and strategic competence, not only accent conformity or error-free delivery. In the Philippine context, this approach remains aligned with the DepEd curriculum's emphasis on communicative strategies and speech situations (Department of Education, 2019). It also addresses the fear of negative evaluation identified in local studies by making evaluation criteria transparent and distributing assessment across multiple opportunities.

The review also suggests that class participation grades require redesign. Participation is often counted as the frequency of whole-class responses, which privileges learners who already possess high confidence and rapid verbal processing. A broader participation construct can include prepared pair reporting, small-group facilitation, question formulation, recorded oral response, peer feedback, and improvement across repeated performances. This does not remove the expectation for public speaking. Instead, it creates a developmental route toward it. Because willingness to communicate is context-sensitive, as reflected across Lee et al. (2024), Li et al. (2025), and Kalsoom et al. (2020), students should be evaluated partly on growth in communicative engagement rather than on a fixed personality-like expectation of constant spontaneity.

Table 4
Evidence-Informed Language Support Framework for DepEd Senior High School English

Component	Teacher practice	Learner experience	Suggested evidence	Outcome indicator
1. Affective screening	Brief anonymous check of anxiety by speaking situation at the start and midpoint of the term	Identifies high-risk tasks without public labeling	Lungay, 2023; Tapado, 2025	Reduced avoidance; improved task completion
2. Graduated oral exposure	Private rehearsal -> dyad -> small group -> whole class	Repeated success before larger audience exposure	Medina Fernandez, 2021; Grieve et al., 2021	More voluntary turns and completed oral tasks
3. Peer-supported CLT	Structured pair/group tasks, balanced turns, respectful feedback norms	Lower-risk interaction with social support	Kalsoom et al., 2020; Loewen & Sato, 2018	Higher WTC and more sustained English interaction
4. Competence scaffolds	Planning time, lexical banks, sentence frames, pronunciation models, task repetition	Reduced cognitive load with genuine language development	Medina Fernandez, 2021; Zhou et al., 2023	Improved fluency, clarity, and strategic competence
5. Low-risk digital rehearsal	Voice recording, ASR where available, model comparison, repeated audio practice	Private, repeatable practice before live performance	Bashori et al., 2021; Lee, Yeung, & Osburn, 2024	Lower self-reported anxiety and stronger readiness to speak
6. Formative oral assessment	Transparent rubric, descriptive feedback, revision or repeat opportunity	Assessment becomes a learning cycle rather than a single exposure event	Botes et al., 2020; Department of Education, 2019	Improved rubric scores across repeated performances

Note. CLT = communicative language teaching; WTC = willingness to communicate; ASR = automatic speech recognition.

At the school level, intervention design should include teacher calibration. Teachers need a shared understanding of speaking anxiety, criteria for psychologically safe correction, and procedures for students who show persistent avoidance or severe distress. Department-level common rubrics can prevent one class from emphasizing punitive accuracy while another rewards communicative risk. Short diagnostic checks at the start of the semester can identify common triggers, and periodic student feedback can show whether classroom routines increase safety and willingness. Where guidance services are available, referral protocols should distinguish ordinary performance anxiety from broader distress that requires professional support. The language teacher's responsibility is pedagogical: to design communication demands that are challenging, fair, transparent, and developmentally sequenced.

The overall evidence therefore supports a shift from the question *Why will students not speak?* to the more analytically useful question *Under what*

instructional and social conditions are students willing and able to speak? Anxiety is one part of the answer, but the review shows that enjoyment, competence, teacher rapport, peer support, task structure, audience size, preparation, and opportunity for repetition all matter. A post-pandemic response that focuses only on confidence workshops or motivational talks would be too narrow. The stronger response is to redesign the ecology of oral communication so that learners repeatedly encounter achievable communicative success, receive useful feedback, and progress toward more demanding public performance.

V. LIMITATIONS

This review has several limitations. First, the narrative design was intentionally broad and did not apply the full duplicate-screening, protocol registration, risk-of-bias scoring, or statistical pooling required of a systematic review and meta-analysis. The synthesis therefore emphasizes convergence and practical meaning rather than a new pooled effect estimate. Second, the evidence base combined foreign language and second language settings, secondary and tertiary learners, different speaking tasks, and different anxiety measures. This heterogeneity supports conceptual breadth but limits direct generalization of any single effect to Philippine senior high school classrooms. Third, only a small number of Philippine studies directly examined Grade 11 or Grade 12 speaking anxiety, and these studies were concentrated in particular schools or regions. They establish local relevance but do not provide nationally representative prevalence estimates. Fourth, post-pandemic evidence remains methodologically uneven because the pandemic changed modality, social interaction, assessment, and learner circumstances simultaneously. Studies that compare online and offline periods cannot isolate every source of observed anxiety. Fifth, some instructional evidence measured willingness to communicate or self-reported anxiety rather than independently rated communicative competence, so improvements in participation should not automatically be interpreted as equivalent gains in linguistic proficiency.

The review also relied mainly on literature available in English and on accessible indexed or publisher records. Relevant local action research, school-based reports, or unpublished interventions may therefore be underrepresented. The proposed DepEd language support framework is an evidence-informed synthesis rather than a tested national program. Its components require evaluation through school-based implementation studies that measure speaking anxiety, willingness to communicate, oral proficiency, participation, and academic performance over time. Future research should also examine whether effects differ by strand, prior English exposure, socioeconomic context, class size, gender, teacher practices, and level of baseline anxiety.

VI. CONCLUSION

Speaking anxiety remains a consequential barrier to oral participation in the post-pandemic classroom, and the available evidence shows that its effects extend beyond momentary nervousness. Across meta-analyses, correlational studies, interventions, and Philippine senior high school research, higher anxiety is associated with weaker achievement, reduced willingness to communicate, and difficulty displaying communicative competence under evaluative conditions. At the same time, Foreign Language Enjoyment, teacher rapport, peer support, meaningful communicative tasks, planning, repetition, and low-risk digital rehearsal are associated with stronger oral engagement. These findings support a developmental response rather than a punitive or avoidance-based one. DepEd senior high school English teachers can preserve rigorous oral communication outcomes while reducing unnecessary social threat through graduated exposure, peer-supported communicative language teaching, competence scaffolds, formative assessment, and repeated opportunities to improve. The central instructional goal is not a classroom without anxiety, but a classroom in which anxiety no longer determines who gets to speak, who can demonstrate what they know, or who develops the competence required for academic and civic communication.

Author Contributions

The author conceptualized the review, developed the search strategy, synthesized the evidence, interpreted the findings, prepared the language support framework, and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

No external funding was received for this work.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

Ethics approval and informed consent were not required because this study reviewed and synthesized previously published literature and publicly available curriculum materials and did not involve direct participation of human subjects.

Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Data Availability

All evidence discussed in this review is available in the cited publications and official sources. The structured evidence matrix used for synthesis can be made available by the author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of AI Use

A generative artificial intelligence tool was used to assist with language refinement, structural organization, and consistency checking during manuscript preparation. Scholarly claims and bibliographic details were checked against source records, and responsibility for the final content rests with the author.

Acknowledgments

None.

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