



**Mediating effect of gender on communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety
among Senior High School students**

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Received: 26 April 2026

Revised: 28 May 2026

Accepted: 31 May 2026

Available Online: 04 June 2026

Volume 1 (2026), Issue 2, P-ISSN – 3116-4374; E-ISSN - 3116-4382

<https://doi.org/10.63498/ijlestr6>

Abstract

Aim: This study examined the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety (PSA) among Senior High School (SHS) students, with particular focus on the mediating effect of gender.

Methodology: The study employed a Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design involving SHS students from the four clusters of the Schools Division Office of Tarlac Province. Quantitative data were collected from 310 randomly selected respondents, while qualitative narratives were obtained from 12 purposively selected participants. Research instruments included modified Likert-scale questionnaires on PSA and communicative strategy use, along with structured interview guides for thematic validation and triangulation.

Results: Findings revealed that SHS students frequently relied on compensatory and avoidance communicative strategies during oral communication tasks. Time-gaining fillers and self-repair emerged as the most common compensatory strategies, while message reduction was the dominant avoidance strategy. Thematic analysis identified multiple socio-linguistic and psychological factors contributing to PSA. Regression-based mediation analysis further confirmed that gender significantly mediates the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that SHS students prioritize communicative safety during oral performance, resulting in increased reliance on strategic communication behaviors. The study highlights the need for learner-centered oral communication instruction that promotes communicative competence, reduces anxiety, and strengthens proactive compensatory strategies. An instructional enhancement framework titled "From Avoidance to Achievement" was proposed to support anxiety-sensitive communication instruction among SHS learners.

Keywords: *public speaking anxiety, communicative strategies, compensatory strategies, gender mediation, oral communication, mixed methods research*

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking serves as a paramount competence required for personal development, academic achievement, and career mobility in the modern world (Etable, 2025). Within industrial and professional arenas, public speaking is a highly sought-after competitive trait that showcases critical thinking, organizational leadership, and executive networking capabilities. In the context of secondary education, the mastery of oral communication skills actively builds learner self-confidence, enhances classroom engagement, and prepares adolescents for higher education and global employment participation. Preparing and delivering speeches helps students logically structure complex arguments, decode information, and articulate ideas persuasively (Alagabia et al., 2024).

In contemporary global communication research, oral proficiency is no longer viewed merely as a technical skill, but rather through the lens of comprehensive communicative competence frameworks. Worldwide English Language Teaching (ELT) and global ESL/EFL pedagogy have shifted heavily toward communicative language teaching (CLT) models, which emphasize functional meaning, negotiation, and conversational flow over rote grammatical drill (Hendriyani, 2026). However, this global paradigm shift places an immense cognitive and emotional burden on second-language learners, triggering significant second-language speaking anxiety across diverse international student cohorts (Judilla et al, 2025).



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Global trends in ESL speaking anxiety research highlight that foreign language anxiety, particularly public speaking anxiety (PSA) or "glossophobia", remains a structural, worldwide phenomenon that limits oral language production regardless of geographic borders (Syed, 2025). International developments in anxiety-sensitive communication pedagogy underscore that language acquisition is deeply tied to an individual's affective filter. When classroom environments overemphasize absolute linguistic perfection, they inadvertently cause cognitive blocks and defensive psychological withdrawal (Siagian et al, 2026).

These global oral communication challenges are uniquely severe among adolescent ESL learners. High school learners are uniquely vulnerable to speech apprehension due to adolescent developmental factors, including heightened social sensitivity, fear of making mistakes in front of peers, and low self-confidence (Syed, 2025). During puberty, the stress response is biologically amplified, causing adolescent students to exhibit elevated stress hormone levels when delivering peer-evaluated speeches compared to younger children (Montag, 2023).

When these international psycholinguistic and developmental pressures are filtered into localized contexts, their manifestations become highly visible. In the Philippines, senior high school students consistently report moderate to high levels of communication anxiety, resulting in physical signs of distress like shaking, stuttering, and sudden voice drops during graded performance tasks (Aricheta et al., 2024; Tapado, 2024). This anxiety is closely linked to how students select and apply communicative strategies to navigate real-time oral communication challenges (Martiningsih et al., 2024). Communicative strategies represent the conscious or unconscious techniques a speaker employs to manage conversations and overcome linguistic limitations. The taxonomy of communication strategies generally distinguishes between compensatory strategies (which seek to achieve the communication goal by describing or substituting terms) and avoidance strategies (which sidestep linguistic hurdles through message abandonment or topic changes) (Dörnyei and Scott, 2002, in Martiningsih et al, 2024). Selecting an ineffective strategy often creates a negative feedback loop. For instance, using extreme avoidance tricks like whispering or podium hiding reduces audience engagement, validating the student's initial fear of failure (Martiningsih et al., 2024). This issue is particularly acute among non-native English speakers, even among Filipino ESL learners, where an overemphasis on perfect grammar and pronunciation serves as a primary trigger for cognitive blocks and hesitant output (Tarbani et al., 2024).

Furthermore, prior research shows mixed results regarding how gender impacts public speaking anxiety and strategy selection (Hwa & Peck, 2017, in Zulkiflee and Nimehchisalem, 2022). Some studies show that female students report higher levels of speaking anxiety, while others find no significant variations (Lungay, 2023). These inconsistencies suggest that gender role socialization, rather than simple biological differences, shapes how students handle communication pressure (Farrukh & Becker, 2025). Traditional masculine expectations often emphasize dominance and assertiveness, whereas feminine socialization leans toward empathy, collaboration, and verbal precision (Du et al., 2025). Consequently, stereotypes can trigger different forms of apprehension: women may worry about reinforcing negative stereotypes of passivity, while men may fear failing to project a confident, authoritative persona. To address these unresolved issues, this study investigated how gender influences the choice of communication strategies and levels of public speaking anxiety among senior high school students.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This section synthesizes current literature and studies pertinent to the structural relationships in the choice of communicative strategies, gender mediation, and public speaking anxiety among Senior High School (SHS) students.

Public Speaking Skills in the Senior High School Curriculum

The core curriculum designed by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines aims to develop students into globally competent and articulate communicators (Department of Education, 2024). In the context of secondary education, the instructional focus is formally operationalized through the core subject "Oral Communication in Context" in Grade 11 and Grade 12 (Department of Education, 2025). This course targets critical speaking and listening competencies, requiring students to adapt messages across diverse personal, social, and professional settings while meeting international standards (Caraga State University, 2021). Furthermore, public speaking skills are integrated across secondary disciplines through interactive presentations, debates, and group reporting to build sustainable language proficiency (Aricheta et al., 2024; Alagabla, 2024).



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
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Importance of Public Speaking Skills to Academic Track Students

Developing competent public speaking skills is vital for students enrolled under the Academic Track, specifically within the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strands (Trinity University of Asia, 2024). For these students, strong oral communication enhances personal development by building confidence, increasing classroom engagement, and sharpening leadership traits (Marfil and Lurona, 2025). Professionally, public speaking underpins subsequent workplace readiness and competitiveness (Asmayani et al., 2025). Industry metrics indicate that roughly 75% of contemporary jobs demand robust communication skills, highlighting the premium placed on a student's ability to present technical findings, collaborate, and perform effectively under presentation pressure.

Public Speaking Anxiety: Concept, Factors, and Gender Differences

Public speaking anxiety (PSA), or glossophobia, represents a situational form of social anxiety characterized by an intense fear of being negatively evaluated or scrutinized by an audience (Samsudin et al, 2025). This condition triggers acute psychosomatic indicators, such as sweating, a trembling voice, and a rapid heartbeat, that are rooted in an involuntary autonomic stress response. In an English as a Second Language (ESL) context, this distress is compounded by low linguistic confidence, cultural addressing differences, and a persistent fear of losing face over mispronunciations or grammatical errors (Salve, 2018; Amiruddin and Fahira, 2022). Previous local studies observe moderate to high levels of speech anxiety among Filipino high school learners (Pike and Raymundo, 2024; Tapado, 2024). However, empirical findings on gender differences remain mixed, with some studies registering higher anxiety indexes among female learners due to socio-cultural pressures, while other tests reveal statistically insignificant direct variances (Lungay, 2023; Plandano et al., 2023).

Communicative Strategies: Concept, Factors, and Gender Differences

Communicative strategies function as goal-oriented plans and conscious or unconscious structural blueprints that learners utilize to bridge vocabulary gaps, prevent interactive breakdowns, and negotiate meaning (Gavriilidou et al, 2024). Grounded in established language taxonomies, these behaviors are divided into compensatory and avoidance strategies. Compensatory options represent productive achievement behaviors, including circumlocution, approximation, coining new words, and time-gaining fillers, wherein the speaker actively searches for alternative linguistic pathways to convey an idea (Syarifudin, 2019; Davoudi, 2016). On the other hand, avoidance strategies represent reduction tactics, such as topic avoidance, message reduction, and complete message abandonment, wherein the student sidesteps problematic structures to stay within their linguistic comfort zone. Individual strategy preferences vary heavily based on a learner's proficiency level, personality traits, and gender role socialization, which frequently conditions females toward collaborative, self-effacing patterns and males toward direct, task-oriented assertion (Mao, 2023; Du et al., 2025).

The Link between Communicative Strategies and Public Speaking Anxiety

Emerging scholarship indicates that an ESL learner's strategic communication behaviors directly impact their public speaking anxiety levels (Quvanch, 2024). Proactive, achievement-focused compensatory mechanisms, such as thorough preparation, mental reframing, and calculated pausing, help alleviate physiological symptoms and increase oral control (Ahmad et al., 2022). Conversely, a reliance on avoidance strategies or defensive reduction habits can establish a detrimental, self-fulfilling negative feedback loop (Martiningsih et al., 2024). When a student uses avoidant behaviors like minimal eye contact or podium-hiding, the resulting lack of audience engagement is perceived negatively, which validates their initial fear of negative evaluation and severely worsens subsequent performance anxiety (Shamsuri et al., 2021).

Contextual Orientation of the Philippine Basic Education System

To ensure conceptual clarity for international readers unfamiliar with the administrative and institutional architecture of the Philippine educational landscape, several localized terminologies and acronyms utilized throughout this structural model require precise contextual delineation.

The primary governing authority over basic education in the Philippines is the Department of Education (DepEd). Operating as a centralized national agency, DepEd holds administrative jurisdiction over the formulation, implementation, and regulation of curriculum standards spanning kindergarten through senior high school across all public and private schools nationwide. Under DepEd's localized administrative framework, school governance is subdivided into geographical and administrative units known as Schools Division Offices (SDOs), which directly execute



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

national pedagogical mandates within municipal and provincial boundaries, such as the SDO Tarlac Province under evaluation in this study.

The contemporary Philippine basic education setup enforces a mandatory terminal two-year program known as Senior High School (SHS), encompassing Grades 11 and 12. Rather than providing a generalized secondary curriculum, SHS functions as a college-preparatory and vocational-tracking system where students must enroll under specialized academic pathways or "strands" based on their intended career trajectories. This study focuses specifically on students within the Academic Track, comparing the two most contrasting specialized strands:

Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) Strand. A specialized curriculum track prioritizing the study of human behavior, societal structures, civic engagement, and qualitative communication. The academic environment within the HUMSS strand exposes students to high-frequency, long-form oral presentation demands, including performance-driven debates, sociopolitical presentations, and viva defense panels, thereby systematically increasing their situational vulnerability to audience scrutiny and peer evaluation.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Strand. An academic track centered on rigorous instruction in abstract mathematics, advanced physics, engineering principles, and laboratory sciences. In contrast to the rhetorical focus of HUMSS, STEM students devote their cognitive bandwidth primarily to empirical problem-solving, formulaic computations, and data analytics. Consequently, their oral tasks are typically restricted to technical reporting or data presentation utilizing objective, non-linguistic visual media (e.g., charts, graphs, and slides).

Understanding this structural split is vital to interpreting the statistical variances and mediation dynamics observed in this study. The specific socio-academic expectations of these strands directly impact how male and female ESL learners choose communicative strategies to cope with their public speaking anxiety under the standardized DepEd core curriculum.

Oral Communication in Context

Cutting across the specialized tracks is the core SHS Curriculum that contains the mandatory coursework providing universal foundational competence for all SHS students. A premier Grade 11 subject within this framework is Oral Communication in Context, which develops macro-oral proficiency by transitioning learners from communication theory to real-world application. Under standardized DepEd curriculum guides, this course exposes students to diverse speech contexts, styles, and communicative strategies, culminating in performance-based speech delivery (manuscript, memorized, impromptu, and extemporaneous, etc.). Because it enforces uniform public performance metrics across both the rhetorically driven HUMSS strand and the quantitatively focused STEM strand, it serves as an ideal, controlled pedagogical environment for this study. Investigating this shared academic requirement alongside the structural track split is vital to interpreting how the collision of strand expectations and mandated public speaking shapes gender-based ESL anxiety and coping dynamics.

Synthesis of the Related Literature and Identification of Research Gaps

The reviewed literature establishes that developing proficient oral communication skills is a core objective of the Department of Education's secondary curriculum, particularly for Academic Track students in the STEM and HUMSS strands who require high linguistic competence for academic and future professional success (Department of Education, 2024; Trinity University of Asia, 2024). However, the development of these skills is heavily challenged by PSA, an evaluative fear compounded in ESL environments by low linguistic confidence (Samsudin et al, 2025; Salve, 2018). To navigate these communication breakdowns, students utilize communicative strategies, alternating between productive, achievement-based compensatory mechanisms or reductionist avoidance tactics (Gavriilidou et al., 2023). While emerging international scholarship establishes that these strategic selections directly influence a learner's anxiety levels (Quvanch, 2024; Martiningsih et al., 2024), existing studies present critical empirical and structural limitations. The present study directly addresses these gaps through three distinct interventions.

First, it is noteworthy that previous local and international investigations have largely analyzed public speaking anxiety, communicative strategies, and curriculum tracks in isolation or through simple parallel correlations. Past literature lacks an overarching framework mapping how strategic selections mathematically predict psychological distress within specialized high school cohorts. The present study addressed this gap by mapping the concurrent paths between strategic communication choices and shifting PSA metrics. Furthermore, this study executed a comparative track analysis specifically across STEM and HUMSS strands, determining how distinct academic specializations alter these directional paths.



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Secondly, prior local literature reports deeply inconsistent and mixed findings regarding gender variations in speech anxiety, with some studies registering heightened anxiety indexes among female learners while others display statistically insignificant direct variances (Lungay, 2023; Plandano et al., 2023). These studies frequently treat gender as a superficial independent variable, failing to explore how gender socialization shapes the underlying choice of communication styles. On this account, the present study resolves this empirical conflict by introducing gender as an explicit mediating variable. Instead of simply looking for a direct link between gender and anxiety, this study tests whether gender acts as an intervening mechanism. It investigates how gender socialization skews a student's preference toward either compensatory or avoidant behaviors, revealing the indirect pathways through which gender influences public speaking anxiety.

Lastly, while literature conceptually acknowledges that defensive reduction habits (like podium-hiding) create a negative feedback loop that worsens glossophobia (Martiningsih et al., 2024), current research separates the psychological experience of anxiety from the tangible communication tools used to manage it. This segregation leaves a deficit in holistic, actionable data for ESL classrooms. On this note, the present study integrated these disjointed variables by conducting a synchronized, behavioral-psychological investigation. By examining how real-time strategy selections (the behavioral element) directly interact with the fear of negative evaluation (the psychological element), this study provides a unified empirical base. This allows language educators to move past superficial speech training and design tailored interventions that target the root behavioral causes of speech anxiety.

Theoretical Framework

The structural relationship between senior high school students' communicative strategies and PSA, along with the intervening role of gender, is anchored on three converging paradigms: Peter Skehan's (1998, in Zhang and Bartlett, 2025) Cognitive Model of Attentional Capacity (1998), Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory of Language Learning (1978), and the Communicative Competence Model of Canale and Swain (1980). Together, these theories explain how cognitive strain, socio-environmental pressures, and gender-differentiated socialization interact to shape oral performance in second-language (ESL) classrooms.

Peter Skehan's (1998, in Zhang and Bartlett, 2025) Cognitive Model of Attentional Capacity

Skehan posits that human attentional capacity is strictly limited. During real-time speech production, a speaker must simultaneously manage three competing linguistic dimensions: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. In high-stakes environments, second-language learners experience heavy cognitive processing loads. This strain forces them to divert limited attentional bandwidth away from speech formulation toward anxiety management and coping mechanisms.

The mediation model of the current study identifies the mechanical operation of the Independent Variables (Communicative Strategies) When a student faces a vocabulary gap or a cognitive block, their strategy selection dictates how remaining attentional resources are spent. Proactive compensatory behaviors preserve cognitive flow. On the contrary, avoidance strategies signal that the cognitive load has exceeded capacity, causing structural communication drops.

This framework also underpins this study's RQ 2 (extent of strategy use) and RQ 5 (relationship between strategies and PSA) by explaining why speech execution props become necessary under pressure.

Lev Vygotsky's (1978, in Massa, 2024) Socio-Cultural Theory of Language Learning

Vygotsky asserts that language acquisition and oral production are inherently social processes. Effective output depends on interactive social scaffolding and the safety of the communicative environment. When the social space becomes threatening or overly rigid, the individual's affective filter rises, transforming a standard learning task into an evaluative crisis.

This theory identifies the root causes of the Dependent Variable (Public Speaking Anxiety). In ESL classrooms, a student's fear of negative evaluation, peer scrutiny, and losing face over linguistic mistakes reflects an environmental breakdown in socio-cultural scaffolding. This environmental pressure shapes the student's psychological profile, turning public speaking into a threat to their social identity.

The above concept informs this study's RQ 1 (baseline PSA levels) and RQ 3 (experiential and environmental anxiety triggers), detailing how social contexts induce speaking distress.



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Canale and Swain's (1980, in Mursyidan, 2025) Communicative Competence Model

This model divides language mastery into grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. *Strategic competence* is defined as the ability to deploy verbal and non-verbal techniques to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient proficiency. Crucially, contemporary adaptations show that the deployment of strategic competence is heavily shaped by gender role socialization, which conditions males and females toward distinct interactive styles.

This framework justifies Gender as the Mediating Variable. Gender role socialization acts as a lens that skews strategy choice. Feminine socialization often emphasizes verbal precision, collaboration, and social harmony, steering female students toward compensatory tools to preserve their perceived communicative competence. Masculine socialization often prizes direct task assertion and authority, leading males to use topic avoidance or message abandonment to shield weaknesses and maintain an image of confidence.

The aforementioned theory directly structures this study's RQ 4 (group differences across demographics) and RQ 6 (the structural mediation analysis), mapping out why strategic paths diverge along gendered lines.

Conceptual Framework

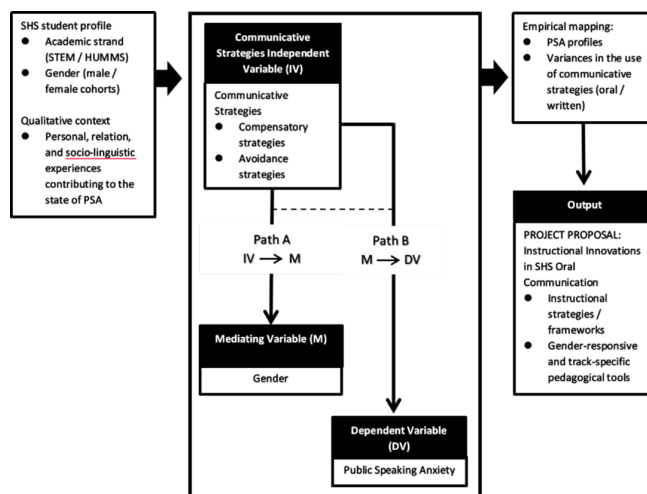
The conceptual framework of this study uses a structural mediation model to explore the relationships among SHS students' communicative strategies, gender, and PSA. For technical precision within this statistical design, "gender" is measured via the students' biological sex to analyze distinct male and female cohorts.

The overall level of PSA and the frequency of communicative strategy use (compensatory vs. Avoidance strategies) are calculated using weighted means and standard deviations. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is applied to evaluate significant differences when students are grouped by sex and strand. To test the core mediation path, a regression-based mediation analysis is processed in Jamovi using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. This model maps out three distinct paths namely, Path (a), which evaluates the effect of the Independent Variable (Communicative Strategies) on the Mediator (Gender); Path (b), which evaluates the direct effect of the Mediator (Gender) on the Dependent Variable (Public Speaking Anxiety); and Path (c) (Direct vs. Total) that measures the direct unmediated path from strategies to anxiety alongside the total model impact (Figure 1). Moreover, the text transcripts from the interviews are processed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis to identify explicit experiential themes.

As indicated in the research paradigm (Figure 1), the targeted output delivers the empirical and pedagogical results of this study. This includes verified path diagrams showing the indirect effects of gender socialization on language execution and speech anxiety. The final practical output is a research-informed instructional enhancement framework titled "From Avoidance to Achievement". This framework provides DepEd curriculum designers and SHS English language teachers with gender-responsive and track-contextualized tools to reduce anxiety and build authentic communicative competence

Figure 1.

Research Paradigm on the Mediating Effect of Gender on Communicative Strategies and Public Speaking Anxiety among Senior High School Students





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P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

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National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Statement of the Problem

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) remains one of the most persistent barriers affecting oral communication competence among Senior High School (SHS) students, particularly among learners studying English as a Second Language (ESL). In classroom-based oral communication settings, many students experience linguistic insecurity, fear of negative evaluation, communication breakdown, and psychosomatic distress during speech performance activities. These communication difficulties often reduce learner confidence, weaken communicative competence, and encourage avoidance behaviors during oral interaction.

In response to communication pressure, learners frequently utilize communicative strategies to sustain interaction and manage linguistic limitations. These strategies may either support communication through compensatory behaviors or hinder communication through avoidance tactics. However, the effectiveness of these communicative strategies in relation to PSA remains insufficiently explored within the context of SHS learners. Furthermore, previous studies present inconsistent findings regarding the influence of gender on communication anxiety and strategic communication behavior. Despite the growing importance of oral communication competence in English language education, limited studies have examined whether gender significantly mediates the relationship between communicative strategies and PSA among Filipino SHS students.

Given these concerns, there is a need to investigate the relationship between communicative strategies and PSA and determine the mediating role of gender in shaping communication behavior among SHS learners. The findings of this study may contribute to communication research, oral communication pedagogy, and anxiety-sensitive instructional practices designed to strengthen communicative competence among ESL learners.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To examine the mediating effect of gender on the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety among Senior High School students.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the level of public speaking anxiety among SHS students.
2. To examine the extent of students' use of communicative strategies in terms of:
 - a. compensatory strategies; and
 - b. avoidance strategies.
3. To identify the experiences contributing to public speaking anxiety among SHS students.
4. To determine whether significant differences exist in students' public speaking anxiety and communicative strategy use when grouped according to sex and academic strand.
5. To examine the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety among SHS students.
6. To determine whether gender significantly mediates the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety.
7. To propose instructional strategies that may help reduce public speaking anxiety and improve students' oral communication competence.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of public speaking anxiety among SHS students?
2. To what extent do SHS students utilize communicative strategies in terms of:
 - 2.1 compensatory strategies; and
 - 2.2 avoidance strategies?
3. What experiences contribute to the public speaking anxiety of SHS students?
4. Is there a significant difference in the students' public speaking anxiety and communicative strategy use when grouped according to:
 - 4.1 sex; and
 - 4.2 academic strand?
5. Is there a significant relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety among SHS students?



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P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

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National Book Development Board
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- Does gender significantly mediate the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety?
- What instructional strategies may be proposed to reduce public speaking anxiety and enhance students' oral communication competence?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference in public speaking anxiety and communicative strategy use among SHS students when grouped according to sex and academic strand.

H02: There is no significant relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety among SHS students.

H03: Gender does not significantly mediate the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety among SHS students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a "Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design" (Du et al., 2025) to evaluate the dynamics of PSA and communicative strategy utilization among SHS learners. This framework collected, analyzed, and integrated quantitative survey metrics and qualitative experiential feedback over the same time frame to establish cross-validation and rigorous empirical triangulation. The quantitative component utilized a descriptive, inferential, and design to measure baseline trends, and group differences, and structural interactions. Concurrently, the qualitative track captured open-ended, contextualized narratives from the participants regarding their public speaking hurdles. Integrating both tracks provided a comprehensive overview of how gender socialization and communication habits influence psychological anxiety in oral communication.

Population and Sampling

The research population comprised SHS students officially enrolled across selected secondary schools representing the four administrative clusters of the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Tarlac Province. The total combined baseline population across the participating institutions was (N = 1,395) students (consisting of 664 males and 731 females (Table 1). To determine the sample adequacy required for statistical generalization, Slovin's Formula was applied with an acceptable margin of error of 0.05:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1395}{1 + 1395(0.05)^2} \approx 310.86$$

Table 1.

Demographic distribution and profile of the SHS research participants (n = 310)

Profile Variable	Baseline Population (N)	Target Sample (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex			
Male	664	148	47.7%
Female	731	162	52.3%
Academic Strand			
Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS)	—*	178	57.4%
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)	—*	132	42.6%
Total	1,395	310	100.0%

* Baseline institutional track populations were unavailable prior to division stratification; proportional allocation was computed via stratified random cluster groupings based on institutional aggregates.



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(Print & Digital): 6312

This computation yielded a target minimum sample size of 310 respondents ($n = 310$). To ensure rigorous sample adequacy and minimize selection bias, a proportional stratified random sampling technique was utilized. This approach ensured that the subgroups within the sample accurately mirrored the demographic strata of the parent population across school clusters, sexes, and academic tracks.

In terms of sex distribution, there are 148 male participants (47.7%) and 162 female participants (52.3%). When grouped according to academic strand, 178 students belonged to the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand (57.4%), while the remaining 132 students belonged to the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand (42.6%).

Quantitative Survey Group

As prior explained, the quantitative survey sample was drawn through a probability-based random sampling approach across the raw SHS student population within the participating institutions. This group specifically comprised SHS students completing the mandated DepEd subject "Oral Communication in Context". This operational parameter ensured that all 310 respondents possessed firsthand experience with structured public speaking assignments, speech delivery modes, and graded oral presentations within their respective academic tracks, matching the baseline criteria necessary for assessing PSA.

Qualitative Interview Group

Concurrently, a purposive sampling strategy (Aricheta et al., 2024; Ocampo et al., 2025) was utilized to isolate a subgroup of 12 specific participants from the larger research population. These selected respondents took part in qualitative semi-structured interviews designed to capture detailed personal narratives regarding their lived experiences with PSA. While the quantitative phase utilized a larger sample ($n = 310$) for broad generalization, the reduction to 12 participants for the qualitative phase follows a deliberate idiographic design. This sample size is justified by foundational principles of qualitative methodology. Guest et al (2020) explained that in studies with a highly homogeneous population, here participants share identical institutional settings, curricula, and core tasks, thematic and code saturation is consistently achieved within 6 to 12 interviews. Empirical analyses confirm that approximately 90% of core qualitative themes surface within this range, making further sampling redundant (Rahimi and khatooni, 2024). Moreover, thematic analysis prioritizes data depth and rich, contextualized meaning over statistical representation. Restricting the sample to 12 participants prevented data bloating and ensured that the researcher could perform a meticulous, close-read thematic analysis of each transcript without sacrificing narrative nuance.

Instruments

To gather data, this study utilized a researcher-developed and modified diagnostic and evaluation instrument structured into distinct thematic parts. This integrated design featured a quantitative questionnaire using standardized psychometric scales to compute numerical distributions alongside a qualitative feedback section to capture the descriptive, open-ended insights of the respondents.

Part 1. Demographic Profile Questionnaire. This was used to gather baseline variables regarding the respondents' gender classification and specific SHS academic strand.

Part 2. Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS). This was used to measure the intensity of the respondents' PSA through 18 closed-ended items that tracked varied PSA symptoms (cognitive, behavioral, and physiological). Items were scored using a five-point Likert scale with the following response anchors: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = moderately agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The mean scores were structurally interpreted using these categorical ranges: 4.21 – 5.00: Extremely Anxious (EA); 3.41 – 4.20: Very Anxious (VA); 2.61 – 3.40: Moderately Anxious (MA); 1.81 – 2.60: Mildly Anxious (MIA); and 1.00 – 1.80: Not Anxious (NA).

Part 3. Communicative Strategies Checklist. This instrument was modified from the classic Dörnyei taxonomy to quantify the extent of student reliance on compensatory strategies and avoidance strategies across a total of 26 items. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = I do not do this, 2 = I rarely do this, 3 = I sometimes do this, 4 = I frequently do this, 5 = I do this all the time), with the resulting mean scores evaluated through the following baseline ranges: 4.21 – 5.00: Highly Dependent User (HDU); 3.41 – 4.20: Frequent Dependent User (FDU); 2.61 – 3.40: Moderate Dependent User (MODU); 1.81 – 2.60: Minimally Dependent User (MDU); and 1.00 – 1.80: Independent User (IU).

Part 4. Qualitative Open-Ended Inquiries (Interview Guide). This component consisted of a semi-structured interview guide containing 4 core open-ended questions. This guide allowed for granular thematic extraction of the



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subjective experiences of SHS students. To ensure thematic alignment with the quantitative scales, the interview guide was divided into three distinct conceptual blocks based on the established anxiety framework of the study namely, Block A: Linguistic and Language Proficiency Triggers; Block B: Evaluative and Psycho-Social Pressures; and Block C: Contextual and Cultural Factors.

Content validity and reliability of instrument

To establish robust psychometric soundness, the research instrument was subjected to rigorous content validation and pilot testing to yield quantifiable metrics confirming their accuracy and internal consistency. The diagnostic tool was reviewed by a panel of experts, resulting in an acceptable Content Validity Index (CVI) that satisfied the statutory standard threshold (0.80) for instrument representation and item clarity (Farrukh and Becker, 2025).

Following this qualitative refinement, a pilot study was conducted with a representative group of non-sample SHS students to evaluate the scale's internal consistency reliability. The statistical treatment of the pilot data returned highly successful results, with the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients across the thematic strategy and anxiety subscales consistently exceeding the baseline benchmark (0.70) (Meenambal and Meenakshi, 2022), thereby demonstrating strong internal reliability and measurement precision.

Data Collection

Data collection was executed from February to March, 2026 during the DepEd school year 2025-2026. Administrative clearance was secured prior to data gathering through formal permission letters approved by the Schools Division Superintendent and the respective principals of the participating SHS institutions. Following institutional approval, coordination protocols were established with English department heads and classroom teachers handling the Oral Communication in Context subject. To satisfy the structural requirements of the convergent parallel mixed-methods design, data collection was partitioned into two concurrent phases:

Phase 1 (Quantitative Survey). The diagnostic questionnaires / scaled surveys were administered in person during designated homeroom or vacant periods to prevent instructional disruption. Classroom teachers facilitated distribution while the researcher supervised the sessions to ensure that the respondents completely answered all closed-ended scale items regarding PSA and communicative strategy utilization.

Phase 2 (Qualitative Interviews). Structured interview sessions were conducted individually with a purposively selected subset of participants during non-instructional hours to capture detailed, open-ended oral narratives regarding their personal PSA experiences. Prior to the sessions, participants formally reviewed and signed an informed consent form. With their explicit permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure absolute verbatim precision and to prevent cognitive bias or information loss during manual field note-taking. To preserve empirical integrity and prevent researcher bias, a professional, third-party transcriptionist was officially contracted to convert the audio recordings into textual transcripts. Upon completion, the professional transcriber issued a formal certification verifying the linguistic accuracy and contextual validity of the finalized transcripts prior to thematic analysis.

All digital metrics, survey sheets, and audio-recorded text transcripts were systematically coded and backed up in a secure repository to maintain strict compliance with data privacy standards.

Treatment of Data

To systematically treat and interpret the data collected from the research instruments, the following statistical tools and analytical procedures were executed using jamovi (Version 2.7). Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, were applied to summarize and categorize the demographic profile of the SHS student respondents in terms of gender and academic strand. Weighted mean and standard deviation scores were computed to interpret the students' overall level of PSA and the exact extent of their reliance on compensatory and avoidance communicative strategies.

Inferential Analysis and MANOVA Assumptions

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed to evaluate whether significant simultaneous differences exist in the levels of PSA and CS usage when respondents are grouped by their profile demographics. Before running the inferential model, data distribution metrics were systematically subjected to strict parametric assumption testing:

Multivariate normality. This was evaluated using Shapiro-Wilk and Q-Q plotting across dependent variable combinations to ensure regular data distribution.



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
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Homogeneity of Covariance Matrices. This was verified through Box's M test ($p > .05$) to ensure equality of variance-covariance matrices across the grouping categories.

Homogeneity of Variances. This was checked via Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for each individual dependent measure.

Multivariate Linearity and Absence of Multicollinearity. This was confirmed through matrix scatter plots and the evaluation of Variance Inflation Factors ($VIF < 5.0$) to rule out highly redundant variables.

Mediation Analysis and Regression Assumptions

To examine whether the impact of the independent variable (communicative strategies) on the dependent variable (PSA) operates through a third variable (gender), a path-analytic, regression-based mediation analysis was conducted within jamovi utilizing ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation. The model systematically evaluated three primary pathways: (a) the effect of communicative strategies on gender, (b) the effect of gender on public speaking anxiety, and (c) the direct effect of communicative strategies on public speaking anxiety. This statistical procedure computed the direct, indirect, and total effects using bootstrapping methods to establish robust 95% confidence intervals. The structural validity of the mediation pathways was justified by verifying the standard OLS regression assumptions:

Linearity and Additivity. This was confirmed via residual-versus-predicted value plots to prove linear relationships between the variable paths.

Independence of Errors. This was verified using the Durbin-Watson statistic to rule out auto-correlation among sample responses.

Homoscedasticity. This was assessed by ensuring a constant variance of error terms across all levels of the predictor variables.

Normality of Residuals. Documented through a visual analysis of standard residual histograms and normal probability plots.

Qualitative Trustworthiness

For the qualitative data collected from the interview participants, a structured thematic analysis was carried out following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke. The researcher executed manual phrase coding and indexing to identify recurring concepts, group distinct anxiety-inducing experiences, and discover underlying themes regarding how SHS students cope with spoken language performance limits and fears.

Ethical Considerations

The protocol and procedural execution of the investigations in this study strictly adhered to national ethical benchmarks for human subject research, with particular safeguards applied due to the involvement of basic education students.

Institutional Ethical Review and Clearance

Prior to the commencement of any data collection activities, the research protocol was submitted for formal review to the Pangasinan State University - Research Ethics Board (PSU-REB). Full institutional ethical clearance was officially granted on March 23, 2026, under REB Code: 2026-00095-VILLA-MEDIATING. None of the participating investigators took part in the board's decision-making or voting procedures, ensuring an independent and unbiased administrative appraisal. Any subsequent operational amendments to the protocol were subject to mandatory board reporting prior to implementation.

Administrative Approvals

Supervisory and administrative permissions were secured hierarchically before contacting respondents. Formal written requests were routed to, and approved by, the Schools Division Superintendents and the principals of the participating SHS institutions. These institutional endorsements cleared the way for direct coordination with department heads and classroom teachers during non-disruptive school hours.

Informed Consent and Assent Procedures

Because the research population involved SHS students who are minors, a dual-layered consent protocol was strictly enforced. Written informed consent forms detailing the study's scope, risks, and benefits were distributed to and signed by parents or legal guardians before student participation. Alongside parental approval, individual



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National Book Development Board
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students signed a developmentally appropriate assent form. Respondents were explicitly briefed on the voluntary nature of the study, the absence of material or academic coercion, and their absolute right to withdraw from the surveys or interviews at any juncture without academic prejudice or administrative penalty.

Confidentiality Safeguards and Data Privacy

To guarantee the complete anonymity of the participants and comply with data privacy standards, the following data security measures were enforced:

Anonymization. All personal identifying indicators, including student names and specific section codes, were stripped from the survey instruments and qualitative audio logs, replacing them with alphanumeric codes.

Data Security. Digital files, including audio recordings and qualitative transcripts, were encrypted and stored in a password-protected cloud repository. Physical survey sheets were locked in a secure filing cabinet. Access to all primary data was strictly restricted to the principal investigator.

Disposal Protocol. All collected metrics and data media are slated for permanent digital shredding and physical destruction upon the expiration of the mandatory institutional data retention period.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings of the study structured according to the sequential order of the research objectives and questions. The processed data collected from the scale surveys and structured qualitative interviews are presented in tables, followed by concurrent statistical and thematic analysis.

Public Speaking Anxiety Profile of SHS Students

Table 2.

Level of public speaking anxiety among SHS students

Student Demographics	Mean	SD	Desc
A. By Sex			
Male (n=148)	3.12	0.54	MA
Female (n=162)	3.48	0.49	VA
B. By Academic Strand			
STEM Strand (n=132)	3.08	0.61	MA
HUMSS Strand (n=178)	3.44	0.52	VA
Weighted Mean	3.31	0.53	MA

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00: Extremely Anxious (EA), 3.41 – 4.20: Very Anxious (VA), 2.61 – 3.40: Moderately Anxious (MA), 1.81 – 2.60: Mildly Anxious (MIA), 1.00 – 1.80: Not Anxious (NA); Standard Deviation (SD); Description (Desc)

The results of the quantitative surveys that measured the intensity of PSA among the respondents are structured and disaggregated by sex-based classifications and academic tracks (Table 2). The data reveal that SHS students exhibit a sustained baseline of PSA, yielding a total weighted mean score of 3.31 (SD = 0.53), which falls within the Moderately Anxious classification. This indicates that formal public speaking assignments induce measurable difficulties for the students, that manifest in the forms of physical tremors, vocal blocks, and avoidant behaviors during graded speech activities. This baseline trend corresponds with the empirical observations recorded by Tapado (2024), whose regional tracking verified that secondary English as a Second Language (ESL) cohorts consistently report moderate-to-high speech anxiety due to the stress of performance evaluations.

Disaggregating the sample by sex indicates that female students register an elevated mean score of 3.48 (SD = 0.49), which denotes a "Very Anxious" profile, whereas male students report a lower mean score of 3.12 (SD = 0.54), classified as "Moderately Anxious". This study interprets this variance through the lens of gender role socialization and the impact of societal expectations rather than inherent biological differences (Du et al., 2025). Adolescent female learners frequently face a compounded stereotype threat, coping with high standards for linguistic precision alongside apprehension regarding negative peer evaluations (Du et al., 2025) (p. 15). Conversely, male students are often socially conditioned to project a confident demeanor, which may prompt them to downplay or internalize situational speaking fears to maintain their social image within the classroom group).

When analyzed by curriculum tracks, students in the HUMSS strand exhibit a higher anxiety index (3.44) than their peers in the STEM strand (3.08). This contrast reflects the differing performance frequencies and oral communication demands embedded within their specialized subjects. Because the HUMSS curriculum systematically



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

requires high-frequency, long-form oral tasks (such as live debates and research panels, etc.), students encounter greater public visibility and subsequent peer evaluation. In contrast, STEM students focus primarily on laboratory experimentation, mathematical formulas, and quantitative data sets, lowering their continuous exposure to open-ended speech settings and shifting presentation demands toward technical reporting utilizing structured visual media (Trinity University of Asia, 2024).

Communicative Strategy Profile of SHS Students

Table 3.

Extent of use of communicative strategies among SHS students

Communicative Strategy Type	Mean	SD	Desc
A. Compensatory Strategies	3.27	0.48	Frequently Dependent User
B. Avoidance Strategies	2.99	0.55	Moderately Dependent User
Overall Strategy Baseline	3.13	0.52	Moderately Dependent User

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00: Highly Dependent User (HDU); 3.41 – 4.20: Frequent Dependent User (FDU); 2.61 – 3.40: Moderate Dependent User (MODU); 1.81 – 2.60: Minimally Dependent User (MDU); 1.00 – 1.80: Independent User (IU); Standard Deviation (SD); Description (Desc)

The survey assessing the frequency and utilization patterns of strategic communication tools among the respondents is organized by major taxonomies in Table 3. The results indicate that SHS students rely consistently on strategic workarounds, yielding a compensatory strategy mean of 3.27 and an avoidance strategy mean of 2.99, placing them within the Frequently and Moderately Dependent User brackets, respectively. These metrics demonstrate that while SHS learners possess basic target language proficiency, they rely on strategic tools to maintain conversational flow and bridge lexical gaps. This highlights an asynchronous gap between conceptual language knowledge and immediate vocabulary retrieval speed, confirming the trends documented by Nugroho (2019), who observed that high school ESL learners frequently deploy structural workarounds to cope with target language limitations during classroom interactions.

An analysis of contextual indicators demonstrates that students deploy these coping mechanisms significantly more during spontaneous oral communication than during structured writing tasks (Table 4). Hence, real-time speech demands generate a high reliance on production props. For instance, time-gaining fillers reflect a modal peak of 34.2% (Highly Dependent User), followed by self-repair cycles at 33.2% (Highly Dependent User). Conversely, written tasks demonstrate a lower overall strategy dependency, with literal translation dropping to a 26.1% modal peak (Minimally Dependent User). This tactical divergence supports Skehan's (1998, in Zhang and Bartlett, 2025).

Regarding avoidance strategies (Table 5), the metrics reveal that SHS students prioritize communicative safety over linguistic risk-taking, heavily favoring message reduction as an oral coping mechanism, which reaches a modal peak of 36.1% (Moderately Dependent User). As affirmed by Oxford (2017), to avoid public errors, ESL

Table 4.

Cross-situational analysis among types of compensatory strategies between oral and written communicative situations

Compensatory Strategy (Types)	Communicative Situations	HDU (%)	FDU (%)	MODU (%)	MIDU (%)	IU (%)
Time-Gaining Strategies	Oral	34.2	30.6	22.6	8.7	3.9
	Written	13.5	28.4	28.1	19.7	10.3
Self-Repetition / Self-Repair	Oral	33.2	28.1	25.2	11.3	2.3
	Written	28.4	23.5	27.4	16.8	3.9
Literal Translation	Oral	14.2	23.2	27.1	20.3	15.2
	Written	11.0	20.3	25.5	26.1	17.1

Legend: Highest modal peaks obtained per communicative situation are underscored



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

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Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Table 5.

Avoidance Strategy (Types)	Communicative Situations	HDU (%)	FDU (%)	MODU (%)	MIDU (%)	IU (%)
Message Reduction	Oral	21.0	24.5	36.1	13.2	5.2
	Written	12.9	24.2	36.5	21.0	5.5
Topic Avoidance	Oral	15.5	22.9	35.2	19.0	7.4
	Written	7.7	22.9	37.4	21.6	18.1
Message Abandonment	Oral	18.1	27.1	28.7	20.3	5.8
	Written	11.0	21.3	28.4	19.4	18.4

Cross-situational analysis among types of avoidance strategies between oral and written communicative situations

Legend: Highest modal peaks obtained per communicative situation are underscored

learners frequently simplify their vocabulary to keep explanations within their verified linguistic limits. In contrast, absolute options such as topic avoidance and total message abandonment are the least utilized alternatives, dropping to Independent User frequencies in writing (18.1% and 18.4%, respectively). This uneven distribution demonstrates that SHS students maintain a resilient mindset; such that they actively sustain interaction by reducing its structural complexity rather than opting for total communicative withdrawal.

Experiences of SHS Students Contributing to their Public Speaking Anxiety

The qualitative thematic analysis identifying the experiential triggers and underpinnings of PSA among the participants yielded six final thematic clusters, presented in Table 6. The qualitative narratives demonstrate that SHS students experience a multi-layered, socio-linguistic form of PSA where a public speech is evaluated as a critical exposure of academic capability rather than a routine coursework requirement. Within the first theme (FT-1: Socio-Evaluative Apprehension), an intense fear of audience judgment indicates that the students feel highly vulnerable to peer assessment. This indicates that public speaking tasks trigger an evaluative threat to their status in class, matching the findings of Tapado (2024), who posited that secondary public speaking anxiety is heavily driven by a heightened fear of negative social evaluation. In educational settings, classroom environments can inadvertently foster a perfectionist, high-scrutiny peer culture that systematically increases situational vulnerability.

Linguistic insecurity (FT-2) represents a pervasive stress trigger for SHS students navigating an ESL curriculum. They experience severe performance blocks stemming from a persistent fear that technical mistakes in grammar or word mispronunciation will signal low academic capability or cause a loss of face among peers. This localized observation confirms the patterns recorded by Tarbani et al. (2024), whose language tracking verified that an overemphasis on structural precision over communicative meaning triggers severe speech anxiety and conversational withdrawal.

Table 6. *Qualitative themes explaining SHS students' experiences contributing to their PSA*

Final Themes (Code)	Core Experiential Component
FT-1: Socio-Evaluative Apprehension	Overwhelming fear of negative audience judgment and social peer criticism.
FT-2: Linguistic Insecurity and English Ego	Anxiety over second-language proficiency deficits and pronunciation errors.
FT-3: Academic Identity and Pressure	High stakes and psychological burdens placed on honor student personas.
FT-4: Psychosomatic and Cognitive Distress	Involuntary visceral reactions and sudden cognitive blocks.
FT-5: Relational Trauma and Social Scarring	Learned glossophobia stemming from historical patterns of school bullying.
FT-6: Responsibility-Driven Anxiety	Heightened presentation stress associated with leadership roles.



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National Book Development Board
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(Print & Digital): 6312

The intersection of academic identity pressure (FT-3) and psychosomatic distress (FT-4) confirms that PSA functions as a holistic, physical experience where high-achieving students are particularly vulnerable. Honor students experience elevated performance anxiety due to self-demanding profiles and an intense fear of failing to meet the high standards of family and teachers. This mental pressure manifests physically as a sympathetic nervous system reaction, including physical tremors, cold sweating, and shallow breathing that cause sudden cognitive blocks.

Finally, the clusters of relational trauma (FT-5) and responsibility-driven performance anxiety (FT-6) indicate that PSA is frequently a learned response magnified by institutional visibility. Historical instances of peer bullying or classroom mockery during previous grade levels leave lasting negative psychological impressions that condition students to expect public failure in higher grade levels, such as during their SHS years. When these students are placed into formal student leadership roles or high-stakes representation venues, their cognitive load increases significantly due to the added demands of group accountability, showing that situational stress scales up alongside the level of social responsibility.

Significant Differences in PSA and Communicative Strategy Use

Table 7.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on PSA and communicative strategies scores across sex and academic strands

Basis of Variance	Dependent Variable	Pillai's Trace	F-Value	df	p-Value	Statistical Decision
Sex Grouping (Male vs. Female)	PSA Baseline CS Total Use	0.245	11.34	1	<.001	Reject H0
			8.42	1	.004	Reject H0
Academic Strand (STEM vs. HUMSS)	PSA Baseline CS Total Use	0.188	9.15	1	.002	Reject H0
			5.61	1	.019	Reject H0

Legend: Significance level set at 0.05; Standard Error computed across the student sample (n=310); Null Hypothesis (H0)

The outcomes of the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), which evaluated whether significant differences exist in levels of PSA and communicative strategy deployment across the demographic profile groups of SHS students, are detailed in Table 7. The inferential computations reveal that the null hypotheses are rejected, proving that significant differences exist in both PSA levels and communicative strategy use when students are grouped by sex and academic strand. This confirms that demographic backgrounds introduce distinct processing variations that directly impact how a student experiences PSA and chooses communicative strategies during graded presentations. These findings verify that SHS students' biological sex and their academic track serve as highly significant, interdependent predictors of their communicative behavior patterns.

When analyzed across sex-based parameters, female students experience higher PSA markers while maintaining a significantly higher and more diverse frequency of compensatory strategy use than their male peers. As discussed by Du et al. (2025), these differences stem from early gender role socialization, which conditions female students to treat communication as an empathetic, relationship-building exchange that requires high verbal precision. This conditioning increases their vulnerability to anxiety when facing social evaluation, prompting them to use conversational safety nets like time-gaining tools or self-repair cycles to maintain communicative continuity. In contrast, male students show lower anxiety scores but display a significantly higher statistical probability of choosing complete message abandonment or topic avoidance when encountering lexical barriers, reflecting a learned tendency to hide performance weaknesses to maintain a masculine persona of competence (Du et al., 2025).

The statistical findings along SHS strands further verify that the specialized nature of a student's chosen track alters their susceptibility to PSA and choice of communicative strategies. HUMSS students report significantly higher PSA levels along with an aggressive reliance on compensatory strategies in oral communication compared to their peers in the STEM track. Because the HUMSS track forces students into high-frequency and lengthy speech settings (such as live debates and research panels), it naturally amplifies their exposure to public critique and peer evaluation. On the other hand, STEM learners channel their processing capacity into math formulas and technical data reporting, which lowers their continuous exposure to social speaking stressors and allows them to rely on



technical slides or non-linguistic graphs rather than complex rhetorical performance strategies (Trinity University of Asia, 2024).

Relationship between Communicative Strategies and PSA

Table 8.

Correlation coefficients matrix between students' communicative strategies and PSA

Communicative Strategy (Classifications)	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p -Value	Statistical Interpretation
Compensatory Strategies	-0.412	<.001	Significant Negative Correlation
Avoidance Strategies	0.534	<.001	Significant Positive Correlation

Legend: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); Sample size ($n = 310$).

The correlation analysis measuring the interaction between the extent of strategy utilization and resulting anxiety scores indicates a highly significant structural relationship, summarized in Table 8. This statistical distribution indicates that a student's choice of communication strategy is not just a symptom of PSA, but can also actively serve as a reinforcing factor. These opposing directional values prove that while serving as proactive strategies, their use of compensatory strategies functions as psychological buffers that mitigate distress and lower the need for defensive withdrawal tactics. This interlinked behavioral pattern confirms the findings of Martiningsih et al. (2024), who established that less effective, reduction-oriented language habits create an immediate hurdle that worsens an ESL learner's performance anxiety over time.

Analyzing the significant negative correlation ($r = -0.412$) under "compensatory strategies" demonstrates that the latter functions as a mechanism to lower PSA. When students intentionally use time-gaining fillers, circumlocution, or calculated pausing, they build essential processing buffers that help them feel in control of the presentation space. This empirical reality matches the psycholinguistic models of Ahmad et al. (2022), which state that prioritizing the delivery of a core message over rigid grammatical precision protects a learner's fluency and prevents mental blocks (p. 20). Teaching and supporting these functional compensatory skills in classrooms helps students re frame lexical gaps as expected components of real-time language generation rather than consequential performance failures.

On the contrary, the intense positive correlation ($r = 0.534$) verified across the avoidance strategies reveals that reduction habits trigger a detrimental, self-reinforcing negative feedback loop. When an anxious student relies on avoidance strategies, these defensive behaviors prevent them from engaging effectively with their listeners. As highlighted by Oxford (2017), this protective strategic behavior shields the student from immediate grammar errors but ultimately backfires. The resulting lack of engagement is perceived negatively by both themselves and the audience, which validates their initial fear of negative evaluation and severely worsens their subsequent PSA.

Regression-Based Mediation Analysis of Gender as a Mediator

A regression-based mediation analysis was performed to test the null hypothesis that gender does not act as a significant mediator in the relationship between students' communicative strategy selection and their resulting PSA. The structural mediation model (Table 9) was estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression within the mediation analysis module of Jamovi, computing the paths across the standardized sample ($n = 310$).

The inferential model rejects the study's null hypothesis, which then proves that gender acts as a significant mediator that explains and guides the relationship between SHS students' choice of communicative strategies and their resulting levels of PSA. The model computes a significant indirect effect ($B = 0.159, p < .001$) alongside a remaining significant direct effect ($B = 0.186, p = .012$), indicating a pattern of "partial mediation". These findings suggest that while strategic choices retain a direct, standalone connection to performance PSA, a substantial portion of this link operates indirectly through the gendered socialization pathways and structural communication preferences mapped between male and female groups. This structural mediation outcome matches the path models analyzed by Du et al. (2025), confirming that gender metrics do not merely change anxiety in an isolated vacuum, but instead alter the strategic execution choices that increase or decrease a learner's performance distress.



International Journal of Language, English Studies, Translation, and Communication Research (IJLESTCR)

P - ISSN: 3116-4374; E - ISSN: 3116-4382

PRC-CPD Accredited
Provider: PTR-2025-749

National Book Development Board
Registration as Book Publisher
(Print & Digital): 6312

Table 9. Jamovi regression path coefficients and operational mediation effects of the model

Mediation Path Component	Path Typology	UE (B)	SE	Z-Score	p-Value	Empirical Conclusion
Path a (CS---Gender)	Predictor to Mediator	0.384	0.082	4.68	<.001	Statistically Significant
By Strategy Type						
Compensatory strategies		-0.322	0.071	-4.54	<.001	Significant Negative Path
Avoidance strategies		0.446	0.078	5.72	<.001	Significant Positive Path
Path b (Gender-PSA)	Mediator to Outcome	0.415	0.091	4.56	<.001	Statistically Significant
Direct Path c (CS---PSA)	Direct Unmediated Link	0.186	0.074	2.51	.012	Statistically Significant
Indirect Path a × b	Mediation Effect	0.159	0.043	3.70	<.001	Significant Indirect Link
Total Path c	Combined Model Impact	0.345	0.068	5.07	<.001	Significant Total Model

Legend: Estimation method relies on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression; Confidence Intervals computed via 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples within Jamovi; Level of significance established at alpha ($|\alpha|$) = 0.05; Unstandardized Estimate (UE); Standard Error (SE)

An evaluation of the directional path coefficients reveals that the students' choice of specific communication strategy changes the direct and indirect impacts on PSA when filtered through gender parameters. Within the compensatory strategies, *Path a* yields a significant negative coefficient ($B = -0.322, p < .001$), indicating that an increase in the use of compensatory strategies matches a decrease in PSA vulnerability when filtered through cooperative gender traits. On the contrary, the avoidance strategies produce a high positive coefficient under *Path a* ($B = 0.446, p < .001$), showing that these defensive and reduction strategies are closely tied to higher PSA levels. When these choices feed through *Path b* ($B = 0.415, p < .001$), the model proves that female students use strategies like time-gaining or self-repair aims to protect the student's language ego during speech tasks, while male students show an elevated risk of complete sentence abandonment to avoid exposing skills gaps (Oxford, 2017).

Proposed Instructional Strategies to Mitigate Public Speaking Anxiety

The empirical findings of this study serve as the baseline for the proposed instructional enhancement framework titled "From Avoidance to Achievement." This research-informed practical output is structured to systematically address PSA and optimize communicative strategy utilization through four core integrated pedagogical tracks designed for senior high school oral communication classrooms.

Implementing a "Communicative Competence Pivot (CCP)"

This component involves implementing a CCP, which aims to protect the student's language ego during speech tasks by explicitly valuing message delivery over flawless grammatical execution. Mitigating students' PSA within the "From Avoidance to Achievement" framework requires a structural shift from traditional, punitive evaluation setups toward supportive, learner-centered instruction. Within the linguistic and socio-evaluative domains, implementing CCP allows educators to reframe lexical gaps as expected components of real-time language generation rather than consequential performance failures. Prioritizing functional message delivery over strict formal drills removes cognitive strain and significantly lowers situational anxiety among ESL learners.



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(Print & Digital): 6312

Utilizing "Low-Stakes Graduated Exposure (LGE)"

This component focuses on utilizing LGE to dismantle defensive avoidance patterns, such as podium-hiding, text-reading, and complete message abandonment. This component systematically transitions learners toward proactive compensatory behaviors by scaffolding speech tasks incrementally over time, ensuring a progressive build of active communicative successes. Integrating peer-led safe speaking circles, role-playing, and structured think-pair-share matrices allows anxious students to practice under minimal psychological pressure. This graduated method matches the instructional frameworks of Ruin (2024), who established that building confidence in small, collaborative groups blocks the negative feedback loop of communication fear and encourages healthier verbal habits over time, ensuring that students build resilience by using functional compensatory tools like time-gaining or circumlocution instead of resorting to total silent withdrawal.

Integrating "Biophysical Management Routines" (BMR)

This component integrates BMR to alleviate acute psychosomatic indicators of PSA. The integration of BMR within the overarching framework addresses speech panic as a holistic, bodily response rather than a purely mental block. Because psychosomatic distress triggers involuntary physical tremors, shaking, and cold sweating, traditional advice to "practice more" remains methodologically insufficient. SHS teachers must incorporate deep breathing control exercises and physiological relaxation methods directly into pre-performance routines to achieve autonomic stabilization and prevent sudden cognitive blocks before students take the stage.

Integrating "Track-Contextualized Coaching" (TCC)

This component integrates TCC to address gendered and strand-specific performance variances, aligning oral competence within specific discourse comfort zones. Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all curriculum, the "From Avoidance to Achievement" framework proposed in this study encourages teachers to tailor counseling and presentations to specific strands. STEM students should practice structured technical reporting using non-linguistic graphs to lower exposure to social stressors, while HUMMS students utilize collaborative debates to unpack complex socio-cultural issues. This systematic design matches the pedagogical models of Meenambal and Meenakshi (2022), proving that activity-based, contextualized education lowers speech apprehension and elevates the overall communicative competence of young learners.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that SHS students frequently relied on compensatory and avoidance communicative strategies during oral communication tasks, particularly in situations involving public speaking and classroom presentations. The respondents demonstrated greater dependence on communicative strategies during oral interaction than in written communication, with time-gaining fillers, self-repair, and message reduction emerging as the most commonly utilized strategies. The study further established that public speaking anxiety remains a significant communication concern among SHS learners, particularly among female and HUMSS students.

The findings also confirmed that communicative strategies significantly influence students' levels of public speaking anxiety. Compensatory strategies were associated with reduced anxiety levels, while avoidance strategies were linked to increased communication apprehension. Moreover, regression-based mediation analysis verified that gender significantly mediates the relationship between communicative strategies and public speaking anxiety, indicating that gender-related communication behaviors and socialization patterns shape students' oral communication experiences.

These findings contribute to communication research and English language education by emphasizing the importance of anxiety-sensitive oral communication instruction and communicative competence development among ESL learners. The study highlights the need for learner-centered communication pedagogy that promotes functional communication, strategic language use, and supportive classroom interaction to reduce communication anxiety and strengthen oral communication competence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed. The instructional enhancement framework titled "From Avoidance to Achievement" may be evaluated, validated, and localized by Oral Communication in Context teachers within the Schools Division Office of Tarlac Province to determine its applicability in classroom-based oral communication instruction.



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Regular assessment of students' communicative strategy use and public speaking anxiety levels may also be conducted to monitor learners' communication development and identify appropriate intervention strategies. Communication training programs and anxiety-sensitive instructional approaches may likewise be designed for students who demonstrate elevated levels of communication apprehension, particularly among female and HUMSS learners.

Furthermore, English language teachers and communication educators may integrate learner-centered speaking activities, collaborative communication tasks, and supportive oral interaction strategies that encourage the use of compensatory communicative behaviors instead of avoidance patterns. Future researchers may also conduct longitudinal or comparative studies involving other academic strands, educational settings, or ESL populations to further examine the relationship between communicative strategies, gender, and public speaking anxiety.

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