# Mics on mute: Speaking Anxiety among Prospective Special Education Teachers

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**Abstract**

The pandemic caused schools to close and students to stay at home in different countries around the globe. Due to the above-mentioned information, educational institutions opted to shift from traditional face-to-face classes to virtual classrooms. Thus, this study aims to determine the factors that trigger prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety in the virtual classroom and the prospective special education teachers' coping mechanism with speaking anxiety inside the virtual classroom. Moreover, this study used a qualitative-descriptive design and then utilized a semi-structured interview. The respondents were chosen via purposive sampling. The total number of respondents is twenty (20) and they are all prospective special education teachers. Their ages ranged from 20 to 22 years old. It was revealed in the study that the factors that trigger prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety are the following: classmate factor, teacher factor, internal factor, learning environment factor, connectivity issues, low self-esteem, overthinking, pressure, being afraid of disappointments, not being a good speaker, and technological factor. On the other hand, these are the revealed coping mechanisms: talking to yourself, cutting explanations short, preparing a script before the class, staying focused, reading ahead of time, and seeking motivation.

**Keywords:** *virtual classroom, speaking anxiety, special education teachers, language*

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

Schools were closed and students were forced to stay at home in several locations throughout the world because of the pandemic (Alban & Alieto, 2022; Francisco et al., 2022). Because of the risks posed by COVID-19, educational institutions have shifted to alternative platforms such as e-learning and remote education (Francisco & Alieto, 2022; Butial et al., 2022; WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021). Furthermore, owing to the pandemic, the transfer from physical classrooms to virtual classrooms reduced the number of COVID 19 cases, and kids and teachers needed to be protected. Despite the numerous obstacles that the educational revolution posed, it was discovered that these virtual classes and the platform posed a significant challenge to institutions (Rehab, 2021). According to Boivin and Welby (2021), the students were able to understand how the pandemic facilitated shifts from instructional approaches and how education was given during the shift.

In a similar manner, virtual classroom is an online platform that facilitates communication between professors and students by allowing them to communicate synchronously via video calls using technology and the internet (Cabangcala et al., 2021; Mumbing et al., 2021; Parker & Martin, 2010). As a result, virtual classrooms allow students and teachers to communicate and engage in real-time (Jacinto & Alieto, 2020). Using this platform to teach English helps students to build

abilities that they would not be able to develop in regular face-to-face lessons(Alshumaimeri & Alhumud, 2021).Previously, there was no relationship between the internet and educational institutions but owing to changes in its uses and the way schools integrated the use of the internet, it became a tool for communication within and outside institutions, as well as a source of information (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). The use of technology has changed the teaching and learning process, particularly throughout the process of utilizing the English language and using it in the current approach to learning a language.Thus, using internet materials and studying the English language allows students to extend their perspectives while also improving their communication abilities (Alswilem, 2019; Borg &Alshumaimeri, 2019; Cong-Lem,2018). Despite these advantages, there are negatives that may result in disadvantages in their communication skills, which can only be developed through face-to-face lessons (Alshumaimeri& Alhumud, 2021). It was discovered that a lack of participation, which is associated with feelings of exclusion and solitude, has an adverse effect on student adaptability in virtual classrooms(Rovai, 2003).

Regardless of the community's distinct language and culture, the use of English as a medium for communication is widely recognized across the world (Ahmed et al., 2017; Mehmoodzadeh, 2012; Nazir et al., 2014). Speaking ability and talent may be learned and developed. It is both intricate and multifaceted (Elkiran, 2021). Thus, the capacity to communicate and reach out to one's surroundings is facilitated by the ability to talk. The criteria for acceptance and understanding of what is going on in society are dependent on your capacity to communicate and talk.Furthermore, acceptable language usage must be founded not only on speaking abilities but also on reading, writing, and listening abilities (Temizyürek et al., 2011; Gün&Akkaya, 2016;). Communication skills are extremely important in social relationships. The ability to talk and communicate in English can considerably assist an English speaker in both personal and professional life (Alhamdi, 2014; Alhosni, 2014; Alshumaimeri, 2019).

There are several aspects of the classroom that contribute to the development of speaking abilities. Students, according to Appel and Borges (2012), must be given ample opportunity to practice and enhance their communication abilities. Speaking anxiety, on the other hand, bears distinct connotations in general communication, particularly in a social situation, with the speaking anxiety employed publicly at any moment needed. Researchers in Turkey discovered that distinct tools exist in mammalian anxiety (Gündüz& Demir, 2021; Ünal&Zer, 2017; Sevim, 2012; Sofu, 2012; Yaman&Sofu, 2013). As a result, having speech anxiety is regarded asa phobia. It is a social phobia in which you are uncomfortable and fearful of being laughed at or ridiculed by others (Marks&Gelder, 1966). As a result, speaking anxiety is the dread of failure and feeling nervous about speaking in front of a crowd(Bodie, 2010).As such, results from several studies contend that that anxiety has a deleterious influence on language learning and acquisition. On the other hand, research reveals thatat some point, fear creates a situation in which it aids in the study and acquisition of foreign languages (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994b, p.284). However, anxiety has a detrimental influence on learning a second or foreign language, particularly in the classroom and other settings where learning is intended to be favorable (Horwitz & Copes, 1986; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996).

Research uncovered that studentsin higher education who speak English in the classroom are more likely to have speaking anxiety during class activities and performances that call for speaking competence (Ahmed et al., 2017; Elald, 2016; Hasrul et al., 2013; Mohammad et al., 2016; Saranraj & Meenakshi, 2016). However, it was noted that studies had not yet fully explored the causes of and coping mechanisms for speaking anxiety among prospective special education teachers.Therefore, the present study aims to determine the factors that trigger prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety and their coping mechanism towards speaking anxiety inside the virtual classroom.

**Review of Related Literature**

**Anxiety**

Anxiety is a combined emotion of fear and belief depending on how one feels and behaves when faced with classroom circumstances such as language acquisition (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Anxiety is therefore a sensation that causes a person to panic, as well as sadness and unease (Burger, 2006). Meanwhile, Baily (1983) discovered that anxiety is caused by unfavorably comparing oneself to other people and that this anxiety level fluctuates with a person's intellectual advancement. Anxiety may create a variety of bodily symptoms, such as being distracted in class, and it can lead to students becoming confused and distracted when performing academic tasks (Huberty & Dick, 2006). As a result, several studies have revealed that it might cause physiological symptoms such as an increase in heart rate, fear, skin redness, and muscular tightness (Karatas et al., 2013). It is necessary to develop confidence in speaking English (Edgington, 2004).

Therefore, there are three perspectives on anxiety. According to Zheng(2008), they are conceptual, social, and course content related. When we say cognitive, we mean when pupils become terrified or nervous, and this impairs their learning process. As a result, it has a detrimental impact on language development; it impacts both the process of learning and student behavior(Ariza, 2002; Horwitz, 2001; Ride, 2011)However, anxiety over speaking in a virtual classroom has not yet been thoroughly examined. As a result, investigating speaking anxiety inside the virtual classroom is contemporary and important, thus this study.

**Factors causing anxiety**

Krashen (1981) stated in his affective factor concept that anxiety creates a gap or wall through which inputs are converted into intakes. There is a sort of anxiety that relates to the dread of being adversely criticized. This anxiety occurs when a person does not want to cope with the evaluation of others because they believe their judgments will be unpleasant. Even if they have not yet spoken, students may believe that their peers or professors will pass judgment on them (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Everyone experiences different levels of anxiety based on their ability to adapt to situations that trigger their fear of talking or speaking. They will be able to overcome their anxiety if they can adapt to these challenges. Unfortunately, if they were unable to adjust, it may have had negative consequences such as issues and others that might cause worry (Kasman et al., 2021). According to studies, students who have a high degree of motivation and self-confidence outperform those who have low levels of drive and confidence (Krashen, 2000; Viswat&Jackson, 1993). Individuals who are anxious about their academic performancesmay be affected, depending on their level of anxiety and the task assigned to them (Crozier, 1997; Ehrman, 1996). Being shy is another aspect that contributes to anxiety. According to the studies of Crozier and Hostettler (2003), children who are shy are more likely to do poorly due to stress from worrying about test circumstances.

Aside from the environment or classmates, external issues such as a lack of support from teachers, insensitivity to surroundings, and a lack of attention can all contribute to language anxiety (Day & Gu, 2013; Siyli & Kafes, 2015). According to researchers, being adversely judged, being fearful of being criticized based on mistakes made, negatively thinking, and low competence are the variables that induce anxiety in speaking (Riasati, 2011; Shabani, 2012; Tsiplakides &Keramida, 2009; Ztürk & Gürbüz, 2014;). However, assessments of anxiety in speaking English in the virtual classroom and their coping mechanisms are lacking making this study pertinent to the current time.

**Anxiety and Speaking English**

According to Djafri and Wimbarti (2018), anxiety is influenced by the teachers' methodologies and behaviors rather than the students' motivation to learn the language. It was stated that the causes of students' speaking anxiety are difficult topics discussed, non-interactive classes, no time for preparation during speaking activities, the teacher's facial expression, and the speakers' fear (Santoso et al., 2013).As a result, the data in Yoon (2012) revealed similarities with Kongchan and Singhasiri (2008) in that research participants stated that they have difficulties teaching the target language and a lack of confidence in speaking English. Furthermore, most anxiety studies concentrate on reading, speaking in class, or participating in extracurricular activities (Celikpazu & Tazdemir, 2022). In his research data from 91 universities, Wu (2011) stated that reading anxiety is related to language anxiety.

Moreover,the causes of anxiety are when you are establishing verbal communication in interacting with an individual, whether you are in small or large groups, and you are having difficulty conversing and understanding the message (Horwitz et al., 1986). However, there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of language anxiety and reading anxiety (Nunung et al., 2021). Nevertheless, a different method was employed.

The authors highlighted anxiety as an emotional experience of strain that causes the student to make studying something tough to comprehend more difficult, and they advised offering students grammatical assignments that would help them understand at a more basic level (Svalberg, 2012).Furthermore, while there are numerous studies related to anxiety and its effects on college and undergraduate level students (Aatay 2015; Han et al., 2016; Kao & Craigie, 2013; Lu & Liu, 2011; Lucas et al., 2011; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Semmar, 2010; Shabani, 2012; Williams & Andrade, 2008; Yentürk & Dadeviren-Krmz, 2020), very few studies related to speaking anxiety on prospective special education teachersexist.

**Effects of Anxiety**

When communication between teachers and students is not clear, students may struggle and experience anxiety (Al-Khasawneh, 2018). As a result, students who speak in front of the class with their instructor may be able to increase their language acquisition and mastery of a specific language (Asysyifa et al., 2019). Researchers show that students who are not satisfied with where they are in life are most likely to have a high level of anxiety (Cook et al., 2000; Samaranayake & Fernando, 2011). Thus, they were focused on effects and none on coping mechanisms of prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety, which this paper investigated.

In his study, Das (2020) revealed a relationship between the participation of students in class and their anxiety. It was said that both urban and rural learners are suffering from anxiety, and it has a negative impact on classroom interaction. Rashid et al. (2020) classified students' fears into three categories: self-esteem, classroom environment, and peer pressure. Thus, it can be concluded that the effects of speaking anxiety go with students' having low performances in class, and those with no anxiety will have good performances in speaking activities (Allen et al., 2021).

**Shift to Virtual Classroom**

Virtual classrooms are platforms that can be accessed online (Wang & Newline, 2012). It is more popular these days (Flatley, 2007; Gilmore & Warren, 2007). Hence, Al-Asmari and Khan (2014) in their study state that these virtual classrooms offer comfortability to students, especially those

living in areas that are just distant localities. This is a space that allows the students to work with their peers interactively, despite not being with each other physically (Gurevych et al., 2021).

According to the study by Croce and Salter (2022), there were four (4) factors that everyone must consider when we set classroom goals and expectations, both in virtual and traditional classrooms. The following are: "(1) co-creation of positive expectations; (2) ensuring that expectations are age-appropriate and simple to understand; (3) teaching expectations to fluency; and (4) empowering students to take ownership of the class expectations by teaching them to self-monitor their behaviors.

In the studies of Danesh, Bailey, and Whisenand (2015), they found out that when classes are done in a virtual classroom, students are more likely to improve their communication skills, because classes online develop speaking skills. However, studies investigating whether virtual classes cause speaking anxiety and coping mechanismsare scarce; this research aims to fill that gap.

**Prospective Special Education Teachers Shift to Virtual Classroom**

The pandemic that forced academic institutions to close has had a significant impact on financially disadvantaged students. The following were considered reasons for the negative effect of the said shift: a lack of motivation from their parents or guardians, the school's unpreparedness, and the teachers' and students' lack of technological knowledge (Martinez et al., 2021; Mikuková & Vereová, 2020; Mustafa, 2020). According to Kelly (2020), there is a shared common experience in using online platforms during COVID 19, as observed by the researchers, and that is access denial. Yet, despite this according to Brownell and colleagues 2005's review of special teacher preparation programs, 'extensive field experiences' are considered an effective program during the teaching practice of prospective teachers when doing fieldwork.

Furthermore, it was also emphasized that in special education throughout teacher education, there is a need for doing the teaching activities because accordingly 'field experience is the best vehicle to prepare future teachers for the complexity and diversity of the classroom' (Billingsley & Scheuermann, 2014, p. 255). Moreover, according to studies, pre-service teachers investigate how they visualize the theories they will use their actual teaching practice before learning how to engage in contextualizing their teaching styles (Fewster, 2012; Naughton, 2016; Samaras, 2000; Tsui et al., 2020).

**Research Questions:**

In view of the foregoing context and purpose, the present study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that trigger prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety in virtual a classroom?
2. How do prospective special education teachers cope with their speaking anxiety in virtual classrooms?

**III. Methodology**

**Research Design**

The study investigated the factors that cause prospective special education teachers to experience speaking anxiety in the virtual classroom, as well as their coping mechanisms. Thus, this study follows a qualitative-descriptive design, which includes semi-structured interviews. Whereas,

according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) qualitative research statedthat (1) the researcherswho gather information are the direct instrument of qualitative research; (2) the data is collected through words and images; (3) the researchers gather and examineprocesses and outcomes; (4) they also analyze data inductively; (5) Finally, the focal point of the study is the understanding of each individual about their lives. Wherein, with these notions, this research will allow the researchers to investigate the factors and coping mechanisms of prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety in the virtual classroom.

**Participants of the study**

The study's respondents were chosen via purposive sampling. Thus, twenty (20) prospective special education teachers from Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) College of Teacher Education participated (CTE). As a result, the inclusion criteria are as follows: (1) enrolled in a special education course at the College of Teacher Education; (2) participated in an online class during the pandemic; and (3) had speaking activities throughout the virtual classroom transition. Furthermore, the respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 22 years old. They responded to the questions in Chavacano, Filipino, and English.

**Instruments and Data Collection**

To fill in the data gaps, the study used a semi-structured interview prepared by the researchers and linked with the research questions. As proposed by Patton (1990, cited in Apsari and Satriani, 2016) that the semi-structured interview is founded on the collecting of thorough responses from respondents, and it is apparent that it restricts inquiries to avoid broad student feedback.Furthermore, the researchers' instrument was validated by a Doctor of Philosophy in Language Teaching and was pilot tested by three language majors who did not participate in the final twenty (20) respondents. The interview was conducted via recorded phone conversations, with transcription completed for data analysis. Before collecting data, the researchers sought ethical consent from the respondents.

**Method of Analysis**

The study utilized thematic analysis in analyzing the data gathered. Henceforth, thematic analysis is the process of discovering the various themes that must be identified after examining and re-reading the respondents' transcribed data (King, 2004; Rice & Ezzy, 1999).

**Result and Discussion**

This section summarizes the findings of data analysis in relation to two questions concerning factors of speaking anxiety and prospective special education teachers'coping mechanisms.

TABLE 1.0: Factors that trigger prospective special education teachers'speaking anxiety in virtual classroom

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Classmate Factor | *"… you don't see their reaction even though they have their cameras open like, the classmates and the teachers…")* (Participant 4) *"I feel low because I know that my classmates are very good in speaking the language and then here comes that I will be asking to speak"* (Participant 5) |
| 2. Teacher Factor | *"… if I'm not ready then I was called by* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *the teacher and I tend to like parang to suffer a lot and then my thoughts were unorganized, so I tend to give answers that I was not satisfied by the teacher…"* (Participant 5)<br><br>*"The teacher asked questions, you can really feel the aura, unlike the virtual classrooms, although it seems the same still there's difference in the face to face and the virtual classrooms..."* (Participant 8) |
| 3. InternalFactor(Fear/Embarrassment) | *"… feeling of failure or fear of being evaluated, as what I have said, I'm afraid of judgement as well…"* (Participant 6)<br><br>*"The cause of my anxiety is the fear of not giving a satisfying insight on a certain topic…"* (Participant 7) |
| 4. Environmental Factor | *"…the outside factor, I'd say the learning environment because I'm not comfortable so I'm not personally not comfortable with reciting inside the house, because in traditional classroom I am not afraid of speaking"* (Participant 1)<br><br>*"You know the environment it says it is so hard and different, it is the environment that's why and the adaptability of the students"* (Participant 3)<br><br>*"…different things they do not have the same settings and the environment as well are totally not the same… "* (Participant 3) |
| 5. Connectivity Issues | *"…there are a lot of factors that affects the way you understand the questions given by the professors for example the electricity and the connectivity issues … "* (Participant 10)<br><br>*"…sending my apologies to one of our professors because I had trouble in my connectivity and what will happen to me is that, in the end of the day I felt pressured, and I overthink … "* (Participant 3) |
| 6. Low Confidence/Self Esteem | *"…it's really my self-confidence holding back without being afraid off and i might think about something or I'm about to say in the recitation…"* (Participant 1)<br><br>*"As I observe the main cause of my anxiety is my low confidence and low self-esteem…"* (Participant 7) |
| 7. Overthinking | *"…you're like kind of overthinking of the scenario and somehow you become anxious about speaking even in the virtual* |

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| | |
|---|---|
| | *classrooms... "*(Participant 4)<br>*"I always overthink and thought that my classmates will laugh at me and that the idea that I am giving is a false statement..."*(Participant 9) |
| 8. Pressure | *"...anxiety in online class the nervousness or pressure, there's additional pressure and then sometimes, I felt anxious, nervousness, because the platform is online class..."* (Participant 3)<br>*"I will really feel pressured and scared, since I cannot control myself during these times. I feel pressured towards what others would say or that they will judge me..."* (Participant 8) |
| 9. Afraid of Disappointment | *"I'll just think that it's okay, that its only for today that I will feel disappointed ... "*(Participant 3)<br>*"...certain topic because I am afraid, I will disappoint myself and that gives me stress ... "*(Participant 7) |
| 10. Not Being a Good Speaker | *"... then I compare myself with others who are better English speakers ..."* (Participant 10)<br>*"I only know simple English I'm not a good speaker, I tend to feel uneasy that sometimes I am grammatically incorrect in speaking ... "*(Participant 2) |
| 11. Technological Factor | *"Using the technology as using the MS Teams, I never had an experience to present using the share of the screen before I only use my phone ... "*(Participant 3)<br>*"...we don't have current and also I lack the things or technology, technological tools, especially laptop and then I was only using my cellphone... "*(Participant 5) |

Table 1 presents the themes pertaining to the factors that trigger prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety in virtual classrooms. The table displays eleven (11) topics identified from the data interview by the researchers.

First, is the classmate factor. Nine (9) out of ten (10) participants said that one of the factors that trigger their speaking anxiety inside the virtual classroom is their classmates. This excerpt from Participant four (*"... you don't see their reaction even though they have their cameras open like the classmates and the teachers...*" provides evidence that the classmate's reaction is not being viewed by the participants due to the platform making them anxious to speak. The respondent also mentioned that their classmate being a good speaker makes them anxious about expressing themselves. This is according to participant five (5), "I *feel low because I know that my classmates*

_are very good at speaking the language and then here comes that I will be asked to speak."_ Thus, teachers have said that they find it easier to handle classroom situations, especially when students feel that they are comfortable with their peers and the classroom environment (Mantra, 2017).

Furthermore, eight (8) out of ten (10) participants also expressed that they feel intimidated when the teacher asks questions during the virtual classes. The following excerpt supports the idea:

**Participant 8**

_"The teacher asked questions. You can really feel the aura."_
_Unlike the virtual classrooms that_
_Although it seems the same, there's a difference._
_in both traditional and virtual classrooms, ..."_

The above shows that the way the teacher expresses her thoughts and asks questions during classes in the virtual classroom affects how the students react.

**Participant 5**

_"... If I'm not ready, then I was called by the teacher._
_and I tend to like to suffer a lot, and then my thoughts_
_They were unorganized, so I tend to give answers._
_that was satisfied by the teacher... "_

The participant expressed how she felt when the teacher asked her to recite, and that the teacher did not give a satisfactory reaction. Hence, Horwitz et al. (1986) mentioned that "communication apprehension (fear of communicating with people), fear of negative assessment (apprehension about others' assessment), and test anxiety (anxiety originating from fear of failure) are contributors to language anxiety".

Furthermore, the prospective special education teachers have also expressed that one of the reasons that causes them fear is the internal factor, in which deep within them, they feel fear and embarrassment when they are asked to speak. These excerpts support the above notion"... _feeling of failure or fear of being evaluated, as what I have said, I'm afraid of judgement as well." and "The cause of my anxiety is the fear of not giving a satisfactory insight on a certain topic."_ According to Lang (1986), when students are handling situations that cause them stress, it affects their physiological, cognitive, and behavioral aspects.

Moreover, the participant's environment while attending classes also affects his or her speaking anxiety. Five (5) out of ten (10) participants have expressed their thoughts on the environment of the student as a factor that triggers anxiety. This shows that the participant felt anxious because she was not comfortable with the environment or the place she was in while attending virtual classes. Thus, in discussing the learning environment, it was also said that co-educational environments do not realize fair opportunities for students (Lee, 2019).

However, internet connection and other connectivity issues, as expressed by the respondents, also affect their speaking anxiety. Five (5) out of ten (10) participants have explained the said idea.

**Participant 10**

_"... There are a lot of factors that affect_
_The way you understand the questions given_
_by the professors. For example, the electricity_
_and the connectivity issues..._

The participant expressed how the connectivity issues affected his comprehension of the questions being asked during virtual classes. Thus, it affects his reaction and the answer he needs for the questions asked. According to Kaisar & Chowdhury (2020), being afraid of being disconnected is the most mentioned factor that causes speaking anxiety in students.

Moreover, five (5) out of ten (10) participants have low self-confidence and self-esteem, which contributed to their speaking anxiety while attending classes. The following excerpt contributes as evidence:

**Participant 7**

*"As I observe, the main cause*
*My lack of confidence is one of the sources of my anxiety.*
*and low self-esteem. "*

The participant honestly expressed that the main cause of her anxiety is the low self-confidence that causes her to be shy and embarrassed and, thus, feels anxious when speaking in the virtual classroom. Having no confidence at all may cause the students to be frightened when performing in front of the class or unable to speak properly (Bahrudin, 2018; Biduri, 2017; De Guzman, 2007).

On the other hand, four (4) out of ten (10) participants also showed that overthinking also affects their speaking anxiety during classes in the virtual classroom. This excerpt"... you*'re like kind of overthinking of the scenario and somehow you become anxious about speaking even in the virtual classrooms..."* from participant four (4) shows that every time she is asked to answer she tends to overthink the scenario she is in and thus contributed to her speaking anxiety that occurred in the virtual classroom. Anxiety will cause the students to have an increased heart rate, sweaty palms, and other physical factors that will be affected once they feel anxious. And it was observed that there were autonomous reactions when students were asked to speak (Beatty & Dobos, 1997).

Hence, with the platform being the virtual classroom, it also contributes to the factors that trigger pre-service education. Three (3) out of ten (10) participants have expressed that they feel pressured to answer questions and do recitations, especially now that they are using the online platform. This excerpt from participant three (3) shows as evidence *"... anxiety in online classes, the nervousness or pressure, there's additional pressure, and then sometimes I felt anxious or nervous because the platform is online class..."*. Furthermore, according to Price (1991), expressing thoughts in front of classmates allows the students to be anxious, especially if they are concerned that making mistakes while presenting will be a reason for them to be judged.

Disappointment also causes speaking anxiety in prospective special education teachers. Thus, three (3) out of ten (10) respondents have expressed their opinion on the factor of being disappointed or thinking that they will disappoint themselves if they answer the questions asked orally. Hence, Dalklç (2001) in his study stated that there is a connection between anxiety in language and the speaker's achievements in speaking activities.

This excerpt supports the idea above:

**Participant 8:**

*"... certain topic because I am afraid.*
*I will disappoint myself.*
*and that gives me stress... "*

Moreover, participants also compare themselves as English speakers with their classmates, as this excerpt from participant ten (10)"... *then I compare myself with others who are better English*

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*speakers..."*Even before speaking, the respondent feels anxious because they compare their performance with that of their classmates who performed earlier than them.Thus, teachers have said that they find it easier to handle classroom situations, especially when students feel that they are comfortable with their peers and the classroom environment (Mantra, 2017).

Lastly, as students use technology, this also comes from their thoughts that having poor knowledge of technology or the lack of it triggers their anxiety. As this excerpt from participant five (5) shows,"... we *don't have current and also, I lack the things or technology, technological tools, especially a laptop and then I only use my cellphone."* Not knowing how to use these or not possessing any gives them anxiety.

TABLE 2.0 Prospective special education teachers'coping mechanism towards their speaking anxiety in virtual classrooms

| | |
|---|---|
| Talking to Self | *"Talking just like you're just talking to your friends just like in ordinary time conversation and in that way, I can make myself comfortable…" (Participant 6)* <br> *"I start talking I juts enjoyed it, that the coldness of my body due to nervousness will just lie low until I just speak and enjoy talking…" (Participant 8)* |
| Cutting the Explanation Short | *"Just giving short answers giving supporting details in what I am trying to say so that i can cope with my anxiety in an English…" (Participant 1)* <br> *"I kind of just thought for a while or sometimes I would cut my explanation short …" (Participant 4)* |
| Preparinga Script before the class begins | *"If it's like a reporting so it's given that you somehow prepare, it's given that you have to prepare for the report, sometimes you prepare a script for the report…" (Participant 4)* <br> *"And I also prepare a script and kept down notes, and even though I feel anxious I try my best in recitations …" (Participant 7)* |
| Staying focused | *"What I really do is that I really focus on the topic what I am going to discuss to my classmates so that I would be able to do…" (Participant 5)* <br> *"Focus on my goals as a student and never look down on what I can do …" (Participant 1)* |
| Reading in advance | *"Sometimes if I have some books, I really read it aloud in my room and in that way, I enhance my vocabulary and speaking skills another thing is I study lesson, I study well. Every time I have reports or presentations* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *there will be recitation, I really read and it's my path for me to learn so when it my turn to speak, I really have to speak..."* (Participant 2)<br>*"I really read and it's a path for me to learn when it is my turn to speak, I have to speak or if there are questions thrown away that you need to answer, you have the answer because you have read in advance …"* (Participant 3) |
| Finding out motivations | *"I will motivate myself by saying that I can do this that, if others can I also, am going to do this"* (Participant 8)<br>*"You really need motivation, for academics, I learned a lot just to satisfy myself when it comes to, having recitation…"* (Participant 3) |

Table 2 presents the themes pertaining to prospective special education teachers'coping mechanisms towards their speaking anxiety in virtual classrooms. The table displays seven (7) themes identified from the data interview by the researchers.

First, six (6) out of ten (10) prospective special education teachers have expressed that they cope with their speaking anxiety by talking to themselves. It suggests that it makes them comfortable and physically ready.Thus, the most accepted coping strategy is problem solving and seeking suggestions, which may help in destroying stressors (Vinothkumar et al., 2016).

Moreover, five (5) out of ten (10) participants have said that cutting the explanation short when they are asked for an oral recitation or a speaking activity inside the classroom makes them less anxious.

The following excerpts support this notion:

**Participant 1**

> *"... by just giving short answers*
> *giving supporting details of what I am trying to say.*
> *so that I can cope with my anxiety in an English classroom..."*

The participant has expressed that giving short answers that are followed up by just a few short supporting details allows her to be less anxious when providing answers during oral recitations.

**Participant 4**

> *"I kind of just thought for a while."*
> *Or sometimes I would cut my explanation short...*

The participant had expressed that sometimes she just chose to cut her idea short rather than to make it longer and feel anxious.

Four (4) out of ten (10) participants have said that preparing a script before reporting in virtual classes creates less fear in the atmosphere. It shows that prospective special education teachers tend to prepare a script before they report so that they are guided during their speaking activity and that they attend classes prepared.On the other hand, staying focused on the activities on hand or on the goals of the prospective special education teachers helped them cope with their speaking anxieties.

The following excerpts support the abovementioned idea:

**Participant 5**

> *"What I really do is that I really focus on the topic."*
> *What I am going to discuss with my classmates*
> *so that I would be able to do what I needed to do. "*

The participant expressed that she has to stay focused on the topic that was given to her. In this case, she can be sure that she will be prepared when she discusses her report with her classmates and that the task assigned to her will be accomplished.

**Participant 1**

> *"Focus on my goals as a student."*
> *and never look down on what I can do... "*

The prospective special education teachers expressed that focusing on her goal and not looking down on her capabilities as a student helps her cope with her speaking anxiety. Moreover, Costa and Kallick (2000) in their study said that staying focused by self-reflecting will allow the students to be confident during classes and will help them grow as well.Furthermore, three (3) out of ten (10) participants were able to express that they were able to cope with their speaking anxiety by reading ahead of time for their lessons and also having time to read other reading materials that they had.

Lastly, two (2) out of ten (10) prospective special education teachers have said that being motivated through their classmates' support or alone motivating themselves can be considered as their coping mechanism during the time that they must speak in the virtual classrooms, yet they are confined inside their house. The following notions support the abovementioned idea: *"I will motivate myself by saying that I can do this, or that if others can do it, I also can."* And "Yo*u really need motivation for academics, I learned a lot just to satisfy myself then recitation..."* Thus, this supports the idea of Saltmarsh (2017) when he said that "the brain is shaped as it interacts with the environment." When the learning climate is non-threatening and comfortable, students are less anxious.

**Conclusion**

The current study focused on the factors that cause prospective special education teachers to experience speaking anxiety in the virtual classroom, as well as their coping mechanisms. According to the data gathered and what the respondents were able to express, there were common factors identified as well as coping mechanisms.

As a result of the findings, prospective special education teachers have the highest rate of anxiety among their classmates. Based on the analysis, it received the highest percentage and was the most common. Despite having the classes virtually, the presence of classmates virtually still triggers the

prospective special education teachers' speaking anxiety. The teacher's influence on how students react when asked to speak is then followed by their emotional aspect, where they feel shy and embarrassed when asked to turn on their microphone and speak. Environmental factors were also addressed, which affect their comfort while attending classes, as well as connectivity issues, which cause them to panic and become anxious while attending virtual classes. Their anxiety is exacerbated by their lack of confidence as well as the pressure and disappointments they face. Other factors mentioned included their inability to communicate effectively and technological limitations. As a result, the eleven mentioned factors cause prospective special education teachers to experience speaking anxiety when attending virtual classes.

On the other hand, it was mentioned that talking to oneself and motivating oneself can help with public speaking anxiety. Making explanations brief and preparing a script aid in virtual class recitations. Making scripts is a technique used by prospective special education teachers to guide creative speaking activities. Reading ahead of time and seeking motivation also aids in coping with anxiety. As a result of the analysis, it was discovered that virtual classrooms, despite being online, contribute to several factors that cause speaking anxiety among prospective special education teachers.Despite the aforementioned, it was revealed that they were able to identify and assess coping mechanisms to reduce their anxiety and continue to attend virtual classes.

Furthermore, the researchers would be delighted if other researchers investigated it further. The researchers suggest that other researchers look for more articles on speaking anxiety in the virtual classroom and conduct additional research on the subject.

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