English-only Versus Mother Tongue: An Analysis on Students' Fluency and Self-confidence

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the impact of English-only policy and mother tongue instruction on the fluency and self-confidence of one hundred-two second-year education students taking a Bachelor of Secondary Education degree major in English at Local Community Colleges in Misamis Oriental. The researcher used a mixed-method approach, combining *Focus Group Discussions*, *Survey Questionnaires*, and *Classroom Observations* to triangulate the data and establish reliable findings. The results show that the main factors that affect students' self-confidence in speaking English in the classroom are their fear of making errors, such as mispronouncing words, peer pressure, ridicule from peers, and inadequate preparation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that students feel more nervous in a strictly English-only policy classroom setting compared to when they use their first language, as they tend to produce more words and express their thoughts more effectively in their mother tongue with less filled pauses and interruptions. To enhance their English oral fluency, the study recommends providing students with more opportunities to practice speaking English in communicative activities and oral discourse.

Keywords— English-only policy, Fluency, Mother Tongue, Self-confidence

INTRODUCTION

nglish is widely used as a means of instruction in various areas such as learning, teaching, and communication. However, Berihun (2018) posits that English is considered a foreign language in some non-native English-speaking countries like Ethiopia, and is typically studied as a subject rather than spoken as a living language in daily conversation. The increasing adoption of English-only policy in a growing number of educational institutions, including universities, secondary schools, and primary schools, presents challenges for students in learning English as a second or foreign language.

In 1985, Kachru proposed a model that categorizes countries that speak English into three groups: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1992). The Inner Circle countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Australia, are where English is used as the primary language of communication. The Outer Circle countries, such as India, Kenya, Singapore, and the Philippines, are where English is recognized as an official language and used as a second language in daily conversation. Finally, the Expanding Circle countries, such as China and Japan, are where English is not an official language but is primarily used as a second language. In the Philippines, English is recognized as one of the official languages, alongside Filipino and other local dialects, known as the Mother Tongue (MT). The term Mother Tongue refers to the first language learned and spoken by an individual, typically acquired from parents or primary caregivers in early childhood. It is also referred to as the first language (L1), native language, or home language. The Mother Tongue is considered to be the language an individual is most comfortable and proficient in and it is often linked to their cultural identity (Awopetu, 2016). Studies have indicated that instruction in the Mother Tongue can have a positive impact on a student's academic and cognitive abilities, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, and overall language development.

On the other hand, the use of English as a medium of instruction has been prevalent in the Philippines for

many years, extending from primary to higher education. Manalastas & Batang (2018) believed that, as a developing nation, the Philippines recognizes the importance of utilizing this widely spoken language to establish its presence on the global stage. English is highly regarded not only for its practical and functional aspects but also for the fact that proficiency in it can greatly enhance one's prospects for career advancement (Regala, 2017). However, for many learners, the process of learning English can be a source of stress and anxiety, given that language serves as a critical tool for communication and self-expression, especially when proficiency in their first language (L1) is limited.

The mastery of oral communication is a vital aspect for teacher education students, as it is a crucial skill necessary for effective participation in conversation and discussions. The students tend to exhibit greater ease and proficiency in speaking their first language (L1), which is commonly referred to as the mother tongue, compared to English. This could be due to various reasons such as limited exposure or practice in English, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, or personal choice. It is important to acknowledge that fluency in one's mother tongue does not always equate to proficiency in other languages, such as English. Therefore, it is crucial for students to continually cultivate their language skills in both their L1 and English for academic and professional advancement.

Effective communication through speaking English can present difficulties for non-native English speakers, who must demonstrate proficiency in areas such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Aziz & Kassinathan, 2021). Psychological factors, including anxiety, self-confidence, fear of errors, shyness, lack of motivation, and lack of confidence, can negatively impact a student's speaking abilities in a foreign language (Gaya, 2018; Nijat, et al., 2019). This has been one of the reasons why students are often hesitant to speak in English in the classroom, due to factors that affect their self-confidence and fluency in speaking the language.

Exposing students to English as much as possible is often considered an effective method for teaching English as an L2. The English-only policy, which requires the use of English as the only language of communication in the classroom, aims to immerse students in an English-speaking environment and help them acquire the language indirectly. This approach is commonly used by ESL teachers and primarily impacts students' speaking skills. However, it can also demotivate students to use the language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a mixed methodology approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques, to examine the impact of the English-only policy and mother tongue on fluency improvement among the participants of this study. The research employs data analysis to compare and contrast results based on fluency and self-confidence. The results are triangulated using three research tools: *focus group discussion* (FGD), a *survey questionnaire*, and *classroom observation*.

Respondents

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select 102 students from a Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program in Local Community Colleges, for the purpose of conducting in-depth surveys, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. These students were in their second year of the program. The researcher observed classes to assess the educational environment and teaching methods of the instructors, and to determine how the students were using the English language or their mother tongue in communication with their teachers and peers.

Research Instruments

This study uses three-pronged methods: a speaking test, a self-confidence questionnaire, and an observation

scheme to verify the qualitative data gathered. Speaking fluency is measured by analyzing speech rate, pause rate, and disfluency markers. The study specifically measures exclusive speech rate, which is the number of words spoken per minute without pauses or disfluencies. The speaking test in FGD is given to both participants to determine if there is any change in their fluency in speaking English and their mother tongue.

The speaking test is based on the study conducted by Shatrova et al. (2017) titled "*English Speaking Assessment: Developing a Speaking Test for Students in a Preparatory School*." It consists of three components: (1) A warm-up phase, which involves signing in, verifying personal identification, and providing an overview of the examination format, (2) A conversational phase with an interlocutor, in which the interlocutor proposes a topic and asks related follow-up questions for a duration of approximately 2 minutes, and (3) An Exam Card phase, where the test-taker is evaluated on their ability to speak for 1.5 minutes on a given topic, demonstrating skills such as describing, arguing, narrating, and speculating. During this phase, the interlocutor's involvement is minimal, with only the confirmation of their understanding of the questions and explanation of any unfamiliar words as needed, along with the ability to ask two (2) additional questions to encourage further speech without providing language support.

In this study, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized as a supplementary research tool, with a rating range of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This questionnaire, which has been adapted from the work of Yaikong & Usaha (2012) with modifications, encompasses four aspects centered on speaking. The first aspect deals with the fear of negative evaluation, including feelings of inadequacy compared to others, fear of being asked to speak, and physical reactions when speaking English or their mother tongue. The second aspect pertains to the ease of speaking in English or their mother tongue and is relevant to the speaking component in the public speaking class. The third aspect is related to test anxiety, including fear of poor performance when speaking in English or their mother tongue, and it reflects communication apprehension in public speaking classes. All these aspects have an impact on the students' self-confidence.

The COLT observation scheme is a tool created by Allen, Fröhlich, and Spada in 1984 to precisely describe the features of communication in second-language classrooms. It was slightly modified and used as part of a larger evaluation framework in this study. The focus of the analysis is on describing patterns of error treatment, teacher-directed questions, student discourse, teaching materials, classroom interaction, discourse initiation, the orientation of classroom activities, topics communicated, student participation, and noise treatment patterns. The study used audio recording and note-taking in addition to the COLT observation scheme to capture different aspects of classroom interaction and context.

Data Analysis and Procedure

As a component of the study, the researcher obtained consent from both teachers and students to record their entire classroom sessions. To evaluate the students' speaking proficiency, a unique metric called the speaking rate was employed. This metric was calculated by dividing the total number of words spoken by the total time taken for the speech and then multiplying by 60. The resulting data was analyzed by comparing the mean test scores. The level of fluency was determined based on the research of Tauroza & Allison (1990). This table shows the level of fluency given below.

Table 1: Fluency Matrix in FGD

Interval (wpm)	Level	Interpretation
191 wpm – above	Fast	High level of uttered words
151 – 190 wpm	Moderately Fast	Moderately high level of uttered words
131 – 150 wpm	Moderately Slow	Moderately low level of uttered words
Below 130 wpm	Slow	Low level of uttered words

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The researcher used a questionnaire named the Public Speaking Class Anxiety Scale (PSCAS) to assess the degree of anxiety of the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, each of which was responded to using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The researcher calculated the total score for each participant and employed it to categorize the level of anxiety. A score higher than 68 was considered as high anxiety, between 68-51 was categorized as medium anxiety, and a score lower than 51 was considered low anxiety. The table below summarizes the scoring criteria used in the study.

Table 2: Self-Confidence Matrix

Interval	Level	Interpretation
68 above	High Anxiety Level	Poor Self-Confidence in Public Speaking
51-67.9	Medium Anxiety Level	Moderate Self-Confidence in Public Speaking
Below 50.9	Low Anxiety Level	High Self-Confidence in Public Speaking

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussions from the analysis of the fluency and self-confidence of the students are organized into three approaches with equal numbers of participants and respondents. The first 4 weeks with once-a-week sessions of focus group discussion emphasized on the fluency of the groups that were instructed to use English exclusively as a mode of communication, while the second 4 weeks with once-a-week sessions concentrate on the use of the students' Mother Tongue. Additionally, the self-confidence of the participants was assessed through questionnaires distributed to the same number of students. Finally, classroom observation schemes were also conducted to verify the responses obtained from the answered questionnaires.

Fluency Level

The first research question looks into the impact of implementing an English-only policy in an oral discourse on the fluency of speaking English in FGD among tertiary education students.

1. *To what extent does the use of an English-only policy affect the speaking fluency of the students?*

Table 1.1. The Fluency Scores in an English-Only Policy FGD session

Word per minute (WPM)	Frequency	Percentage	Fluency Level
191 – above	0	0.000	Fast
151 – 190	3	2.941	Moderately Fast
131 – 150	4	3.922	Moderately Slow
Below 130	95	93.137	Slow

Table 1.1 displays the results of the oral fluency assessment of the group that was required to only communicate in English. The participants in this group were noted to utilize filler sounds such as "*umm*" and "*ahh*" during their speech. According to formal classifications, interruptions in speech can be divided into two categories: silent pauses, which are comprised of silent intervals between vocalization, including breath pauses, and filled pauses, which are defined as interruptions in speech flow by non-lexical sounds such as "*ah*," "*mm*," "*er*," "*uh*," or "*um*" (Cenoz, 1998). In this particular case, the participants were

observed to frequently use filled pauses, which may indicate a state of anxiety.

During the initial stage of the focus group discussion, the facilitator noticed that some of the participants exhibited signs of nervousness such as trembling hands and feet, perspiration, and even fainting. However, as the FGD sessions progressed, these physical indications of anxiety decreased, but the participants still employed filled pauses in their speech patterns. This resulted in a modest improvement in the number of words spoken per minute each week. Moreover, the participants demonstrated a tendency to switch between English (L2) and their native language (L1) while expressing their views and answering questions. This is in line with the findings of Helmie et al. (2020), which indicate that students utilize code-mixing to make their explanations more comprehensible and communicate their intended meanings more effectively to the listener. Example:

Excerpt 1: "*The best meal that I ate earlier, sir… is… was… kanang egg gali [like the egg]… kwek-kwek man tali to[I think orange egg]… yeah… because I like it…*"

Excerpt 7: "*I was stressed during our class, sir… kay nag-oral recitation man gyud mi [we had oral recitation]… and wala ko naka-study ba [I was not able to study]… 'coz I'm busy at home…umm*"

The excerpt above highlights the occurrence of code-mixing among the students during their explanations. For instance, the fourth example showcases a student who mixed his L2 with his L1 while explaining the term "kwek-kwek" to the interlocutor. The seventh statement also exemplifies the use of code-mixing, where the respondent clearly articulated their oral recitation and the reasons behind their lack of preparation through a combination of L1 and L2. The use of code-mixing may emerge when a student is unable to locate the right words or phrases in their L2, enabling them to communicate their thoughts and ideas in a more effective manner.

Additionally, research conducted by Yuan et al. (2006) has shown that the average speaking rate for ESL speakers is between 152 to 170 words per minute, with an average segment length of 9 to 11 words per turn. However, in this study, 97.06% of the participants failed to reach this average speaking rate and produced an average of 120 words per minute in a week, which falls short of the average speaking rate for ESL speakers. Despite having the highest speaking rate among participants, the total average number of words produced in four (4) weeks was 480 wpm, which is still below the average speaking rate for ESL speakers.

The analysis of the oral discourse showed that the participants tend to exhibit prolonged pauses while translating from their first language (L1) to their second language (L2). This observation is in line with the findings of Cenoz (1998) who states that pauses can indicate the speaker's need for time to plan their next utterance(s). However, as noted by Garman (1990), not all pauses can be considered a sign of language planning, and speakers may not always need to pause when formulating their speech. Another phenomenon observed during the study was the repetition of words and phrases, where the participants repeated previous expressions as a means of organizing their thoughts and emphasizing key points. For example:

Excerpt 10: *"I spend my weekend at the beach… at the beach… uhhmm… together… together with my…family…"*

Excerpt 16: *"I was just at the… at the home… in our house… ahh… spending time with my… with my siblings and parents watching…ahh… Netflix…"*

The tenth and sixteenth excerpts highlight the presence of repetitions and filled pauses in the students' oral discourse. The student in the tenth example repeated the phrases "*at the beach*" and "*together*" as she faced difficulty in finding the next words or phrases. This repetition and use of filled pauses indicated a sense of hesitation or uncertainty. On the other hand, in the sixteenth statement, the student also made use of silent

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and filled pauses, which were connected to the repetition of "*at home*" and "*with my*". These repetitions served as a means of giving the student time to think and organize thoughts, ultimately allowing them to find the appropriate words and emphasize key points in their discourse.

2. *To what extent does the use of a Mother Tongue affect the speaking fluency of the students?*

Table 2.1. The Fluency Scores in a Mother Tongue FGD session

Word per minute (WPM)	Frequency	Percentage	Fluency Level
191 – above	5	4.902	Fast
151 – 190	89	87.255	Moderately Fast
131 – 150	8	7.843	Moderately Slow
Below 130	0	0.000	Slow

The results in Table 2.1 suggest that when using their mother tongue, students exhibit a more fluid and confident speaking style, characterized by a faster pace of speech, fewer pauses, and longer stretches of continuous speech. This demonstrates that the students are more comfortable and proficient in expressing their thoughts and opinions when using their L1 in oral discourse, compared to when using L2.

In the study conducted by de la Fuente and Goldenberg (2020), it was found that the utilization of L1 in L2 classrooms had a positive impact on students' fluency and confidence levels. The authors report that students utilized their L1 to comprehend new words and concepts in the L2. Similarly, Tammenga-Helmantel et al. (2020) also found that if students are not allowed to use their L1 in English classrooms, individuals who have limited knowledge of English may struggle to participate and comprehend. This highlights the importance of allowing students to use their L1 as a tool to bridge the gap between their L1 and L2 and to enhance their understanding and expression of ideas. Example:

Excerpt 16: "*Lisod na gyud ang panahon karon, sir, kay mahal na ang mga panaliton. Bisan kami sa panimalay dili na gyud mi gagamit ug Sibuyas sa pagluto. I think, kailangan na gyud sa Government to make plans and action aron… kanang… ma-sulbad or ma-solutionan na ning problema na to ron…*"

[Life now is really difficult, sir, this is due to the high prices of commodities. Even in our house, we no longer use onions in cooking. I think, the government really needs to make plans and action… so that… that… this problem can be solved…]

Excerpt 20: "*Last week, nag-tanaw mi ug Avatar na movie, sir, nindot kaayo ang story ug ang effect bitaw niya… kanang ma-amaze ka sa visual presentation, sa storyline… basta ang tanan. Maka-ingon gyud ka na worth it ang ticket for almost 2 hours na salida…*"

[Last week, we watched the Avatar movie, sit, the story was really good and the effects were amazing… you will be amazed by the visual presentation, the storyline… everything. You will definitely say that the ticket is worth it for a two-hour show…]

The excerpts presented above highlight the students' ability to articulate their opinions fluently, with minimal hesitation and less use of fillers. Despite this, the presence of code-mixing and code-switching is still evident in their responses. For instance, in the sixteenth statement, the use of English words such as "*government*," "*plans*," "*action*," "*effect*," "*amaze*," "*visual presentation*," and "*storyline*" are incorporated into their speech pattern. The utilization of these linguistic features across sentences enhances clarity and facilitates knowledge transfer in a more efficient manner. According to Rasul (2006), the practice of mixing and switching between English and regional languages has become more prevalent in recent times due to the recognition of English as an international language. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in Southeast

Asian communities and schools, where both teachers and students use English lexemes to emphasize and underline their statements.

In a study by Loubazid (2012), it was found that psychological barriers, such as lack of self-confidence, language anxiety, shyness, and fear of making mistakes, significantly impact the fluency of students in oral discourse. In a mother tongue classroom environment, it was observed that the participants demonstrated higher levels of self-confidence and reduced language anxiety, allowing for more fluent and expressive communication. This was evidenced by the student's ability to establish eye-to-eye contact, nodding in agreement with statements made by their peers, and exhibit fewer hand gestures while expressing their thoughts and opinions. These findings suggest that the use of a student's mother tongue (L1) in the classroom can have a positive impact on their oral fluency and overall confidence in speaking.

The results of the comparison between the use of the English language and the use of the mother tongue in the classroom environment show significant differences in terms of fluency. On average, students are able to express themselves with limited proficiency in the English language, speaking at a rate of 80 words per minute, whereas when using their mother tongue, their fluency increases to a range of 155-160 words per minute. This indicates that the language used in oral discourse has a significant impact on the fluency of students. The predominant use of the mother tongue, instead of the English language, in the classroom environment affects the self-confidence of students, hindering their ability to express themselves intelligibly.

3. *What is the student's confidence level in speaking the English language in an English-only policy classroom environment and in a Mother Tongue learning environment?*

Table 3.1. Comparison of Student's Confidence in English and Mother Tongue Instruction

Interval	Frequency		Level	Interpretation
	EOP	MTB		
68 above	8	0	High Anxiety Level	Poor Self-Confidence in Public Speaking
51-67.9	92	6	Medium Anxiety Level	Moderate Self-Confidence in Public Speaking
Below 50.9	2	96	Low Anxiety Level	High Self-Confidence in Public Speaking

The table above highlights the varying levels of confidence among students in an English-only policy (EOP) and Mother Tongue (MT) classroom setting. The results indicate that there is a clear difference between students' comfort levels when speaking English and their native language. The findings are consistent with the study by Rumiyati & Seftika (2018), which found that students often experience anxiety when speaking English due to a lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, less knowledge of the language, feelings of inferiority, limited exposure to English, poor mastery of materials, shyness, and the lack of regular practice in speaking English. These factors have a significant impact on students' confidence levels, especially for those who are not native English speakers and primarily communicate using their mother tongue. The findings of the survey and observation have indicated that students experience high levels of anxiety in the English-Only Policy (EOP) classroom setting. This anxiety, caused by factors such as negative reactions from classmates and teachers, concerns over grammatical mistakes and mispronunciation, and the fear of being ridiculed, has a significant impact on the students' speaking performance. The results show that 90.20% of the participants *agreed* and 7.84% *strongly agreed* that they become nervous and confused when speaking English in the EOP classroom. The physical manifestation of this anxiety includes trembling, sweating, fear, shyness, rapid heartbeat, confusion, nervousness, and smiling to conceal the feeling. These findings highlight the need for a supportive and encouraging learning environment to help students overcome their anxiety and develop their speaking ability in a second language.

According to the survey results from PSCAS, 86.27% of the students reported feeling *strongly afraid* of

being laughed at by their peers while speaking English, with an additional 9.80% indicating that they somewhat *agreed* with this sentiment. This is in line with the findings of Riffat-un-Nisa Awan et al. (2010), who found that speaking in public was identified as the primary cause of anxiety among students, followed by concerns over grammatical errors, pronunciation, and the ability to speak spontaneously. In the classroom, the researcher observed instances of students laughing at and repeating mispronounced words made by their peers, which only further exacerbated the fear and embarrassment felt by the speakers. This lack of self-confidence and reluctance to speak due to anxiety can negatively impact the student's ability to express themselves effectively in English.

The utilization of L1 in a mother tongue-based classroom environment has been found to be more effective compared to the use of L2 in an English-Only Policy (EOP) setting. In a study by Alshayban & Alghammas (2020), it was noted that students are more expressive and participative when using their mother tongue than the English language. The study also found that it is difficult to remove the mother tongue entirely from student discourse, even in an EOP classroom setting. This observation is supported by the findings of Polio & Duff (1994), who found that the most common reason for using the L1 in a classroom setting was to obtain information on the meaning of words, phrases, and concepts. The students' responsiveness and their ability to express themselves intelligibly with minimal pauses and fillers, as noted in the study, indicate a *high level of self-confidence in public speaking*.

On the other hand, the instructors believed that L1 use hindered their students' language development and only added confusion to the class. Juarez & Oxbrow (2008) also noted that the instructors' stance on the use of L1 in the classroom was motivated by their belief that the goal of learning English was to become proficient in the language, which would not be possible if they allowed the use of the student's mother tongue. These contrasting views highlight the importance of finding a balance between the needs and views of both instructors and students in language learning. The effective use of both L1 and L2 in the classroom can enhance the student's learning experience and promote language development.

4. *What are the common factors that affect the student's confidence in an English-only policy classroom?*

Table 4.1. Common Factors Observed in an English-Only Policy Classroom

Factors	**Observations**
Speaking English is challenging	· Unable to express themselves effectively in the English language, with hesitations, and filled pauses noted. · Students tend to code-mix and switch from their L2 to L1 in oral recitation. · The classroom environment is quiet when asked to speak in English. · Students uttered only a few words and sentences. · The students tend to use declarative or imperative sentences.

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Fear of incorrect pronunciation	· There were no volunteers when the teacher asked the class. · Students oftentimes mispronounced words, and substituting the sound /u/ to /o/, /f/ to /p/, and /ð/ to /d/. · Students tend to read words or sentences quickly to avoid recognizing mispronounced words or expressions. · Students generally prefer speaking in Mother tongue than in English language.
Peer ridicule/ pressure	· With the mispronounced words, peers laughed and constantly repeated the mispronounced word(s) as a form of teasing. · Sometimes, peers laughed and smiled to each other when they know the thought is out of context.
Lack of preparation	· Students tend to remain quiet or silent when the teacher called volunteers or names. · Some students were unable to respond promptly to the questions when it is not given ahead. · Students always used fillers or filled pauses. · Students tend to avoid eye-to-eye contact with the teacher during oral recitation.

The findings of the COLT observation scheme in the English-only policy (EOP) classroom are summarized in Table 4.1. The researcher noted that the students exhibit low fluency in expressing themselves in the English language. They tend to switch to their L1, or mother tongue, when emphasizing their thoughts, resulting in code-mixing. The use of simple declarative sentences was observed in oral discourse, such as, "*My mother is sick*," "*It is a beautiful day*," "*I like siomai*," and "*Belle is a friendly person*." On the other hand, in the mother tongue-based (MTB) class, students were able to express themselves more freely and elaborate on their answers spontaneously. Rastegar and Karami (2015) found that a student's willingness to communicate is directly proportional to their level of anxiety, with high anxiety leading to a low willingness to communicate. This suggests that anxiety can have a negative impact on a student's attitude and performance in school.It has been noted that some students in school may experience anxiety due to the implementation of an English-only policy in the classroom. This is a result of their difficulties with the language, leading to hesitation to speak in front of others. The prior experience of anxiety and fear can result in mispronunciation of words, such as the replacement of the fricative /f/ with a bilabial /p/, and the interdental fricative (voiced) /ð/ is replaced by the voiced alveolar stop /d/ in *Those*, and *Them*. The fear of being mocked or reprimanded for making a mistake can impede normal behavior and hinder communicative competence, leading to emotional distress and a decrease in linguistic self-confidence. A study by Pabro-Maquidato (2021) confirms that students tend to lack confidence when they have limited knowledge of the second language, such as grammar, pronunciation, and meaning. This lack of confidence leads to hesitancy when speaking, negatively impacting fluency. Consequently, students with high levels of anxiety and low levels of self-confidence may face difficulties in developing their speaking abilities.

The study found that negative attitudes from classmates or instructors, such as teasing, significantly

impacted the fluency and self-confidence of the participants. The participants feared making errors in front of their peers and being publicly embarrassed or subjected to ridicule. This fear was observed to cause students who made mistakes to lose their concentration, become restless, worried, and even sweat. Some students attempted to hide their nervousness by smiling or laughing. This conclusion is supported by previous research by Marwan (2007) who found that negative attitudes from peers or instructors can lead to a decrease in confidence and hinder the learning process.

Lastly, the study's results revealed that inadequate preparation was a significant factor contributing to the student's lack of confidence. According to the participants, they experienced anxiety when they did not prepare adequately for speaking exercises or oral recitations, and they felt responsible for their worry and the negative impact it had on their learning. These findings are consistent with previous research findings by Marwan (2007), who found that poor preparation was the primary cause of student failure, and by Iizuka (2010), who noted that inadequate preparation could result in negative outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this research was to conduct an analysis of the level of fluency and self-confidence among tertiary education students in Local Community Colleges in Northern Mindanao in non-native English classroom settings, comparing the English-only policy environment to the mother tongue instruction environment. To ensure the reliability and legitimacy of the data collected, a triangulation method was employed, utilizing a combination of *focus group discussion* (FGD), *survey questionnaires*, and *classroom observations*.

The results and findings section of the study identified several factors that impact the fluency and self-confidence of students in both an English-only policy environment and a mother tongue learning environment. A focus group discussion conducted as part of the study revealed that the participants had a slow fluency level when using the English language. During the oral discourse, the use of filled pauses and physical symptoms of anxiety, including shaking hands and feet, sweating, and fainting were observed. Additionally, the participants tended to code-mix and switch from their second language (L2) to their first language (L1) for emphasis and struggled to find the appropriate words to express their thoughts clearly and accurately.

A comparative analysis showed that students in a mother tongue environment were able to express themselves with increased fluency, producing more words per minute than in an EOP instruction setting. The average number of words produced per minute was higher in the mother tongue environment. During the oral discourse, fewer filled pauses were observed, but instead, silent pauses were noted. There were also fewer physical symptoms of anxiety present. Code-mixing of words was observed as the students expressed themselves and responded to questions in an intelligible manner.

The results of a PSCAS survey instrument indicated that students exhibited a moderate level of anxiety in an EOP environment, compared to a mother tongue instruction class where they reported lower or no anxiety. This suggests that students are able to express themselves more freely and effectively in a mother tongue instruction class, compared to the EOP environment. Observation in the classrooms revealed that students feel more relaxed and are more likely to volunteer answers to questions when they are able to communicate in their mother tongue. Conversely, in EOP classes, a noticeable lack of interaction from the students was observed.

Generally, English language proficiency is often a challenge for students who must switch between their second language (L2) and their first language (L1) during speaking. In a non-native English classroom environment, it is common for students to experience fear of incorrect pronunciation, which can result in embarrassment from peers or humiliation in the event of mispronounced words during oral discourse and

recitations. Another contributing factor to a lack of fluency and self-confidence is inadequate preparation, as teachers may provide limited time for students to respond to questions, leading to difficulties in their language abilities.

These recommendations are proposed with the objective of improving the fluency and confidence of students in an English-only policy (EOP) classroom setting. Colleges and Universities should strictly enforce the use of English as a second language, both within and outside of the classroom, and consider implementing policies that motivate and encourage the utilization of communicative and collaborative activities in classes. To maintain and enhance the existing language programs across disciplines, it is recommended that an enhanced English language program or courses be established. Finally, teachers should be provided with opportunities to attend training sessions, seminars, or workshops aimed at improving their teaching methodology and pedagogical skills.

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