
RESEARCH ARTICLE

When Words Fail: A PRISMA-Guided Systematic Review of the Effects of Speaking Anxiety on Language Performance and Communicative Confidence

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ABSTRACT

Speaking anxiety is the fear and worry surrounding the act of speaking. Despite its widespread prevalence, there has been very little research into its effects across different populations, needs, and contexts. This paper presents a systematic literature review of studies on the effects of speaking anxiety among learners and educators, conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. To structure the literature review, the authors introduced parameters that the selected studies had to meet. A total of twenty-two studies were screened for inclusion and respected the parameters set out in the current study. The twelve studies, 11 of which were conducted in the Philippines, serve to confirm a large-scale relation between speaking anxiety and poor oral performance, memory retrieval, and physiological calmness, while in one instance the influence of speaking anxiety on written performance differs from debilitating to facilitative. The usual fears include apprehension about negative evaluation and lack of preparation. Numerous strategies serve as means of mitigating speaking anxiety, including familiarization with the audience, self-calming techniques, structured practice, and exposure therapy with the help of virtual reality technology.

KEYWORDS

speaking anxiety, public speaking anxiety, foreign language anxiety, communicative confidence, systematic literature review, PRISMA

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1. Introduction

The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is one of the most useful skills a person can possess and is an important basis for success in school and in dead-end jobs. Speaking out in public, whether in the form of an oral presentation or while answering questions in class, is for many students and professionals a source of high anxiety, guilt, and impatience (MCCROSKEY, 1977). Speaking anxiety has borne the label of one of the most common fears among people of different backgrounds. It has been shown that this problem occurs in the classroom and interferes with an individual's ability to speak well and remember information (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Language education has been a subject of interest in speaking anxiety ever since Horwitz et al. (1986) laid the foundation of the theory of foreign language classroom anxiety, along with the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. This scale identified communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation as three major sources of language anxiety. The work of Gardner and MacIntyre (1994) provided further insights into the issue, as their model explained how language anxiety influences various stages of the cognitive process, thereby clarifying why anxious speakers struggle with spontaneous speech production. In addition, the work of Alpert and Haber (1960) highlighted the difference between debilitating and facilitating anxiety and reminded researchers that anxiety may not always be harmful.

The effects of not addressing speaking anxiety are far-reaching and last longer than merely an uncomfortable situation at the podium. It has been shown that students affected by high speaking anxiety prefer to remain silent rather than participating in oral communication. They perform below their actual abilities during speaking evaluations, leading to lower self-confidence and self-esteem rates (Quinto & Macayan, 2019). This is particularly concerning for both novice and experienced teachers whose profession requires them to frequently speak in front of an audience across various settings. From this perspective, the issue of speaking anxiety contributes to different dangers and may hinder the process of instruction, classroom management, and overall satisfaction with a profession (Astrero et al., 2024). Despite the seriousness of the problem, many studies fail to investigate it comprehensively and instead focus on a specific population (e.g., one grade or a single profession), use varied measures, and present outcomes differently.

In conducting a systematic literature review in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology (Page et al., 2021), this study aims to tackle the challenge of fragmentation. The review specifically aims to address the following research questions: (1) What are the research characteristics and contextual factors that have emerged in the literature on the impact of speaking anxiety? (2) What sources and triggers of speaking anxiety have been identified in the existing literature? (3) What is the impact of speaking anxiety on oral performance, academic achievement, and language proficiency? and (4) Which interventions and techniques are relevant to alleviate speaking anxiety? This review, through its systematic identification, evaluation, and summation of current evidence, aims to provide researchers, educators, and programs involved in teacher education with sound and usable empirical support for addressing the issue of speaking anxiety.

2. Theoretical Framework

The basis of this review lies in three related theoretical positions that recur in studies of speaking anxiety. To begin with, the original formulation of foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) distinguishes three interconnected sources of anxiety in oral communication contexts: communication apprehension (the fear of communicating with others faced by people) as highlighted by McCroskey in 1977, test anxiety (the fear of a performance being evaluated), and fear of negative evaluation (the worry about negative evaluations coming from other learners, teachers, or the audience). This tripartite model provides a set of concepts that will be used across all examined articles to explain the emergence of speaking anxiety.

In their cognitive-processing model, Gardner and MacIntyre (1994) contend that language anxiety influences communication in three stages - input, processing, and output - making it possible for anxiety to hinder how information is encoded, affect mental processing and rehearsal, and - more importantly for the present paper - degrade the fluency and accuracy of the results of communication. The model lays the foundation for explaining the frequent findings reported in the studies included in the analysis: that the influence of speaking anxiety is greatest during spontaneous oral speech.

Alpert and Haber's (1960) distinction between facilitative and debilitating anxiety is another useful lens through which we may analyze the phenomenon. Specifically, this distinction enables us to notice a pattern that arose multiple times throughout the literature we have been reviewing, namely that, while anxiety does not impair performance in general, there are instances when anxiety leads to enhanced performance as it, for example, encourages further preparation, careful self-correction, and so on. This finding is essential for interpreting previous studies such as the one by Macayan et al. (2018) wherein speaking anxiety demonstrated both debilitating and facilitative effects depending on the communicative situation under study. To put it differently, the three frameworks, namely sources, cognitive mechanism, and valence, enrich the synthesis of findings made in the current review.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review design guided by the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021), which specifies a 27-item checklist and a structured flow diagram (identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion) for transparent and reproducible reporting of systematic reviews. The completed PRISMA 2020 checklist is provided in Appendix A.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria were decided beforehand. Studies were eligible for this review only if all of the following conditions are fulfilled: (1) speaking anxiety, including public speaking anxiety and speaking part of foreign language or second language anxiety, was the main object of the study, and the research investigated the impact of speaking anxiety or its causes instead of simply

mentioning the presence of anxiety; (2) the research provided some measure related to speaking anxiety outcomes, such as some oral performance or task achievement, communication confidence, coping methods, and so on; (3) only peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, and systematic review or meta-analysis could be used, and (4) full text of the materials was in English.

Studies are to be disregarded when: (1) speaking anxiety is only mentioned in passing or as a less major concern as the main focus of the study is elsewhere (for example, one dealing with educational technology, video games, or attitudes towards storytelling); (2) the study is concerned with validation or development of some measuring tool instead of having to address the question of anxiety effects; (3) speaking anxiety is viewed among many other unrelated anxiety constructs without focusing on it; (4) there is no mention or measure of anxiety; or (5) the study is essentially a repeat of other acceptable or rejected studies."

3.3 Information Sources

This review was based on 22 records compiled from two data sets. Articles published in academic journals and conference proceedings were obtained from an institutional repository, along with two additional records from live submissions. The peer-reviewed documents include writings registered in databases such as ERIC and publications from journals including GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies, Environment and Social Psychology, IOP Conference Series, and the International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation, with publication years from 2018 to 2026. Information from these articles relates to speaking anxiety, public speaking anxiety, and foreign language anxiety.

3.4 Selection Process

The screening process was done in two parts. The first part is called the identification phase. It included retrieving the authors, abstracts, and full records for the selected records to determine whether the applications met the inclusion criteria. One record was rejected, resulting in 21 unique records for screening. The next part is the eligibility phase. The information in each selected identity was reviewed to determine eligibility and whether the eligible materials matched the included and excluded criteria, respectively. The screening process adhered to the principles of systematic and iterative nature, whereby controversies were settled through discussions. Nine records were discarded from the study, of which about six records were rejected because the authors didn't focus on public speaking anxiety. The full list of excluded studies, with reasons, is provided in Appendix D. This process yielded a final sample of 12 studies for inclusion in the review. The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram summarizing this process is presented in Figure 1.

3.5 Data Extraction

For each study appearing in the analysis, the following information was included in the systematic literature matrix (Appendix C): the name(s) of the author and the publication year, title of work, title of journal or source, country/setting, research design, characteristics of population/sample under investigation, specific focus on study of speaking anxiety, data collected, and major conclusions made by authors. Data extraction was performed independently by the research team members, with cross-checking of the collected data for correctness and consistency.

3.6 Synthesis Method

Given the diversity of study designs, populations, and outcome measures in the literature consulted, we used narrative and thematic synthesis rather than a systematic review and meta-analysis. We first described the studies (by year, country, study design, and population) and then used thematic synthesis around four categories: (a) sources and causes of speaking anxiety, (b) impact of speaking anxiety on speaking performance and educational outcomes, (c) impact of speaking anxiety on communication confidence and mental well-being, and (d) ways to overcome speaking anxiety. The thematic framework directly influenced the organization of the Results section.

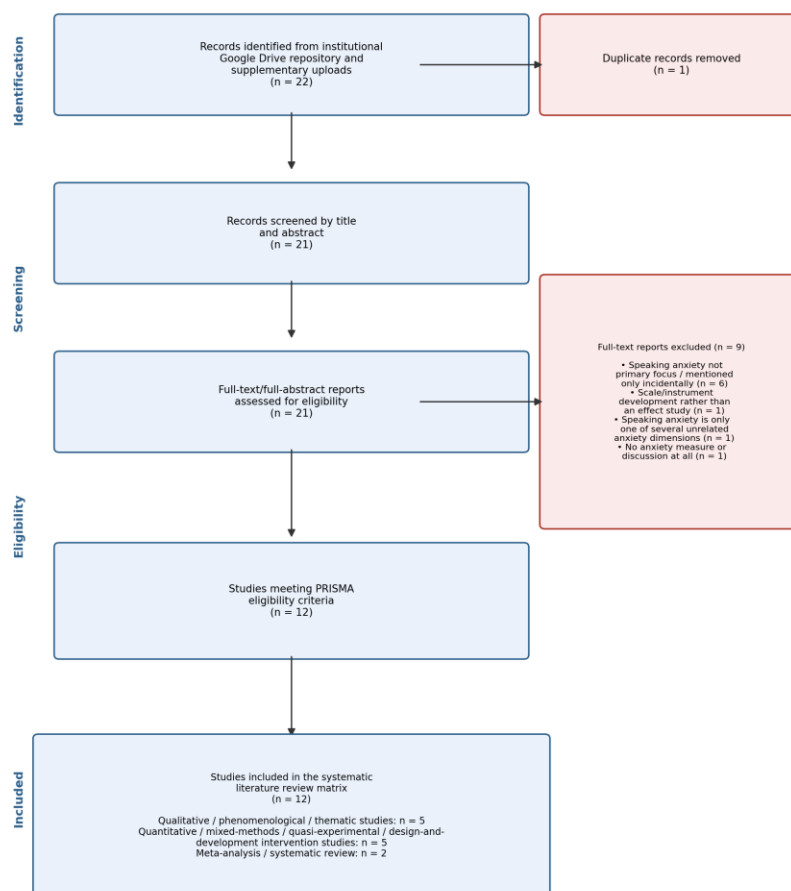


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the systematic review in two parts: first, the study selection process and descriptive characteristics of the included literature; second, a thematic synthesis of findings organized around the four analytic categories described in the Methodology.

4.1 Study Selection

Figure 1 shows that 22 records were found in the institutional repository and in supplementary submissions. Out of them, 1 duplicate record was deleted from the database, thus leaving 21 records screened according to eligibility criteria. Nine records were identified as not eligible and excluded at the eligibility stage for the reasons summarized above and provided in detail in Appendix D. Thus, the final synthesis includes the remaining 12 studies.

4.2 Characteristics of Included Studies

The 12 studies under consideration were published between 2018 and 2026, with the majority (eight out of twelve, or two-thirds) published post-2024. This suggests that the focus on speaking apprehension in education in the Philippines and Southeast Asia has increased recently. Seven studies were performed in the Philippines and contributed by the geographical location or the educational context spanning from senior high school to college engineering, teacher education, and academic leadership and embracing the population from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Only one (Dikmen, 2021) was a meta-analysis of 69 primary studies published in 14 countries.

When considering the methodology of the corpus, there is an equal distribution of studies among three major methodological categories. Five studies (42%) employed qualitative, phenomenological, or thematic methodologies with the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic or reflexive thematic analysis of the data collected on the lived experiences of individuals suffering from public speaking anxiety, such as senior high school students (Berry et al., 2025), college debaters (Quinto et al., 2025), public speakers (Julhamid & Julhamid, 2025), last-mile learners (Villamor et al., 2025), and academic leaders (Savellon et al., 2024). The same number of studies (five or 42%) implemented quantitative, mixed-methods, quasi-experimental, or design-and-development methodologies, such as two explanatory sequential mixed-methods studies on engineering students (Quinto & Macayan, 2019; Macayan et al., 2018), a quasi-experimental one-shot case study evaluating the effectiveness of a speech program (Pontillas, 2020), a needs-analysis-driven training design (Ong & Zambas, 2021), and a quantitative descriptive survey on pre-service teachers (Astrero et al., 2024). The last two studies (17%) were secondary synthesis studies: a systematic review on the applicability of virtual reality exposure therapy to manage public speaking anxiety (Daniels et al., 2020) and a meta-analysis on foreign language anxiety and EFL performance (Dikmen, 2021).

The populations examined included Grade 7 students, university engineering students, prospective and practicing teachers, as well as higher education executives, demonstrating that speaking anxiety is an issue that needs addressing throughout life rather than just during school years. Appendix C provides a summary of important features for all 12 studies included in this review.

4.3 Sources and Triggers of Speaking Anxiety

Across the studies reviewed, the same three sources of speaking anxiety emerged repeatedly. The first was the fear of negative evaluation, or the fear that one will be judged, criticized, or ridiculed by friends, teachers, or audience members, which was the most often mentioned cause of speaking anxiety in the studies reviewed. According to Berry et al. (2025), high school students' self-doubts stemmed from both the fears of being judged by others and from a negative self-image; Villamor and Cajetas-Saranza (2025) revealed that children in grade 7 experienced fear of embarrassment as well as fear of not being able to respond to questions properly. Quinto and Macayan (2019) also note that, among engineering students, fear of negative evaluation is primarily caused by their friends and teachers.

A lack of preparation as well as ignorance of the context of speech resulted in the second source of anxiety. As the research by Astrero et al. (2024) shows, the anxiety of future teachers increased in situations characterized by unpreparedness and spontaneous speech, which confirms Gardner and MacIntyre's belief (1994) that anxiety causes the greatest disruptions in output when cognitive processing demands are at their highest. Similarly, Julhamid and Julhamid's research (2025) emphasized that unawareness of the audience, regardless of its demographic, cultural, or interpersonal characteristics, is another factor that provokes anxiety since it makes audience familiarization possible.

There exists a third source which tends to be overlooked but deserves to be taken into account- that is, physiological and cognitive symptomatology. More particularly, research performed by Astrero et al. (2024) showed that when pre-service teachers became aware of their physiological symptoms, that is, a rapidly beating heart, they would intensify instead of merely accompanying their anxiety- which means that there exists a loop of feedback connecting cognitive appraisal and somatic arousal. Also, the results of the study conducted by Ong and Zambas (2021) demonstrated that senior high school students and teachers participated in a formal needs analysis and realized they could benefit from specially designed material that incorporated situational and physiological aspects.

4.4 Effects on Oral Task Performance and Academic Outcomes

Across the studies considered, the most widely accepted and most consistent finding is that speaking anxiety has a very negative impact on performance when speaking tasks are concerned. The first example comes from the study by Quinto and Macayan (2019), in which the researchers found a negative relationship between speaking anxiety and the ability to perform a speaking task in a sample of 162 engineering students from the Philippines. This relationship was shown to be statistically significant. In the supplementary study of Macayan et al. (2018), the authors applied the findings of Quinto and Macayan (2019) to show that language anxiety has a negative impact on speaking performance but a positive impact on writing tasks. After mentioning that the study has been performed on the same sample, the authors also demonstrate that the negative effects of speaking anxiety are associated with social-comparison anxiety while the positive effects are explained by the effects of grade anxiety.

At the secondary synthesis level, a meta-analysis done by Dikmen (2021) on 69 studies (N=23,150) from 14 countries indicated an overall correlation of $r = -.61$ between foreign language anxiety and EFL achievement; and the type of anxiety served as a strong

moderator, showing that listening, test, and speaking anxiety had higher negative correlations compared to reading and writing anxiety. This large-scale evidence supports the direction and relative strength of the foreign language anxiety effect found in the Philippine studies tested in this review.

In addition to task performance in the strictest sense, the studies included demonstrated no major effect of fluency on other levels of memory and information processing in line with Gardner and MacIntyre's (1994) processing-stage model of communication. As shown by Astrero et al. (2024), despite their thorough educational preparation, the pre-service teachers, while making a public speech, had problems with retaining the knowledge they have acquired even in the course of their education and were nervous about the items connected with the problem of being anxious and forgetting ($M = 3.58$, high anxiety). This means that not only is proficiency in speaking affected by anxiety, but also other spheres of cognitive processing.

4.5 Effects on Communicative Confidence and Psychological Well-Being

Besides the objective performance results, the studies analyzed in this paper showed that speaking anxiety significantly decreased communicative confidence and psychological health. These findings were best demonstrated in qualitative studies. For example, in a study by Berry et al. (2025), self-doubt among senior high school students manifested in two ways: internally, as they tended to overthink issues and withdraw emotionally, and externally, as ineffective speeches in which the speaker demonstrated nervousness. Julhamid and Julhamid (2025) showed similar results, indicating that unresolved speaking anxiety destroys speakers' trust in themselves over time, while effective management of anxiety helps restore speakers' self-confidence.

The persistence of speaking anxiety has been observed among individuals who have speaking experience and high professional standing. In a study conducted by Savellon et al. (2024), academic leaders experienced speaking apprehension despite their authority and profession. This indicates that being an expert or professional does not help overcome the fear of speaking unless there is a conscious effort to address the issue. Smart et al. (2024) found that teacher education trainees reported moderate anxiety (Grand Mean = 3.19) during teacher preparation.

Unlike the previous study, Quinto et al. (2025) provided evidence of a constructive counter pattern: in the context of university students who participated intensively in public speaking and debates, anxiety is gradually managed, then transformed into confidence and cognitive flexibility, which points to the effectiveness of prolonged and methodical practice of public speaking instead of avoidance.

4.6 Strategies and Interventions for Mitigating Speaking Anxiety

The studies gathered highlighted various approaches that can reduce the effects of anxiety in speaking, with some of them being shown to be effective. Among the different strategies, the one most promoted through the studies was structured and repetitive practice. The experiments performed by Quinto et al. (2025) and Savellon et al. (2024) show that a regular supply of speaking opportunities, combined with constructive criticism and a supportive environment, plays a key role in establishing permanent confidence in speaking skills. Pontillas (2020) provides experimental data on a specific intervention, Popsispeak, which has shown a significant decrease in public speaking anxiety among ESL college students, and it is the only method among those studied to show some advertising effects.

Another sure-fire category of intervention consisted of self-regulation and preparation techniques. According to Julhamid and Julhamid (2025), it was found that self-regulating techniques such as deep breathing, visualization, and affirmations were helpful in controlling the physical and mental symptoms of public speaking anxiety. Likewise, the practice of getting to know the audience beforehand through demographic and cultural background research and socialization helped overcome anxiety by eliminating the uncertainty that caused it. Berry et al. (2025) also found that positive self-talk, mindfulness, and grounding were effective techniques for helping senior high speakers overcome uncertainty during speech preparation and delivery.

On a more fundamental level, Daniels et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of 14 studies investigating the use of virtual reality exposure therapy (VRET) to address public speaking anxiety. The reviewers concluded that, while VRET is effective, it is just as effective as traditional cognitive behavioural therapy and entails less cost and complexity, although treatment length plays a significant role in determining its effectiveness. In support of this technology-based approach, Ong and Zambas (2021) showed the effectiveness of a need analysis-based training program that was being developed and improved through a series of trials, allowing for the embedding of this tool into school curricula, which is particularly relevant to the needs of senior high school students and their teachers. A similar multi-faceted institutional response was suggested by Astrero et al. (2024), including

workshops and classes, learning-conducive environments, relaxation practices such as mindfulness, peer-led classes, and reflective practices for learners to follow.

5. Discussion

The outcomes of this review indicate a clear, well-founded understanding that speaking anxiety is a widespread, multifactorial phenomenon leading to poor performance in oral tasks. The findings are in agreement with, and add to, the work of Horwitz and others (1986) and McCroskey (1977), while evidence from various countries given in Dikmen's (2021) review ($r = -.61$ between foreign language anxiety and EFL performance) proves that the negative influence described in the studies conducted in the Philippines and presented in this review cannot be regarded as specific to one culture or educational system, indicating that the link between anxiety and language performance is applicable to different contexts.

Also, the outcome of this review supports the fact that anxiety is more complicated than being purely negative (Macayan et al., 2018). Instead, the result of the study indicates that speaking anxiety may reduce our ability to speak effectively, but at the same time it may push us to produce better written performance. This evidence distinguishes between debilitating anxiety and facilitating anxiety, as proposed by Alpert and Haber (1960), and suggests that psychological help should take the form of specific interventions, meaning that the methods suitable for treating debilitating speaking anxiety may not be the ones applicable to written anxiety or test anxiety. Furthermore, the model proposed by Gardner and MacIntyre (1994) affirms the theory mentioned above because speaking requires more effort from the brain and thus creates more cognitive overload.

The outcomes of this research show considerable significance for language teaching practices and teacher-training policies. To start with, the fact that fear of negative evaluation has been constantly recognized as the main factor in almost all the studies included in the research (Berry et al., 2025; Quinto & Macayan, 2019; Villamor & Cajetas-Saranza, 2025) shows that there are factors contributing to solving the issue of speaking anxiety such as the classroom environment, which should be characterized by feeling of psychological safety, the use of positive feedback focusing on providing constructive information instead of punishing the students, and mistakes being viewed as normal rather than something negative. Besides, the existence of anxiety among well-known leaders in academia (Savellon et al., 2024) and among teacher trainees (Astrero et al., 2024) shows that this kind of anxiety should be analyzed and considered not as something that disappears over time but as something that demands a lasting approach to work with the issue of anxiety throughout their career. Lastly, the effectiveness of interventions using both low-tech means (structured activities, self-calming strategies, audience exposure) and high-tech means (virtual therapy) shows that institutions may use both low-tech and high-tech interventions in accordance with their possibilities (Daniels et al.).

This review makes evident that there are gaps that need consideration within the research community. Most of the studies addressed in the review used small, single-institution samples and cross-sectional or short-term designs, which limit the ability to determine whether the benefit of anxiety reduction persists over time or the long-term effects of interventions against speaking anxiety. The predominance of primary studies on Philippine education (i.e., of 12 studies, 11 were conducted in the Philippines) is a limitation because it reflects a specific literary corpus rather than a representative body of world literature on the topic. However, this also provides opportunities for comparative studies to assess whether the results of this review can be applied to other educational systems. Finally, the absence of a common instrument across the studies—some used the adopted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales, others used the Public Speaking Classroom Anxiety Scale (Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012), and some used their own protocols—also complicates comparisons of effect sizes.

6. Limitations

This review has certain limitations. The first limitation concerns the records screened, which were taken from an established repository and supplemented by submitted records. Although the pool of records is extensive and diverse, it may not be fully exhaustive, and similar studies that may have been missed may exist. The other limitation is the heterogeneity in outcome measures, designs, and study populations; hence, a narrative thematic synthesis was used instead of a quantitative meta-analysis, which precludes precise estimation of the effect size of speaking anxiety.

Third, assessing the risk of bias and methodological quality using a consistent evaluation instrument required for this review was not possible, and the level of evidence coming from studies analyzed in this study should be assessed based on the descriptions of methods in Appendix C. Fourth, since most of the studies in this review were conducted in the Philippines, the overall conclusions of the review are difficult to generalize to other educational and cultural contexts. Future reviews will benefit from employing new

approaches to gathering material from different databases, performing a proper quality assessment, and conducting analysis across several nationally different contexts if similar data are available.

7. Conclusion

The systematic literature review, conducted using the PRISMA 2020 framework, interactively summarized 12 studies on the influence of speaking anxiety on both students and teachers, mostly in the context of the Philippine educational system. Evidence showed that speaking anxiety, which originates from concerns about negative evaluation, unpreparedness, and an unfamiliar audience, negatively impacts performance during oral tasks, recall, and confidence in communication. It has different effects on some of the other language skills, which indicates the importance of understanding the difference between facilitating and debilitating anxiety. The review is positive and reveals several different ways to minimize the effects of speaking anxiety, including low-technology approaches like structured practice, self-relaxation techniques, or getting used to the situation, and richer technological options like virtual reality therapy. This means that public speaking anxiety is not an unchangeable barrier to communication. Further research may employ advanced methodologies such as longitudinal studies, standardized measures, and comparative studies in cross-cultural settings to deepen our understanding of the causes and solutions to the problem.

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Appendix A. PRISMA 2020 Checklist

The following table maps this systematic review to the 27-item PRISMA 2020 checklist (Page et al., 2021).

Section	Item #	Item	Checklist Item Description	Reported In
TITLE	1	Title	Identify the report as a systematic review.	Title
ABSTRACT	2	Abstract	See the PRISMA 2020 for Abstracts checklist.	Abstract
INTRODUCTION	3	Rationale	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of existing knowledge.	Introduction, para. 1–3
	4	Objectives	Provide an explicit statement of the objective(s) or question(s) the review addresses.	Introduction, para. 4
METHODS	5	Eligibility criteria	Specify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review.	Methodology – Eligibility Criteria
	6	Information sources	Specify all databases, registers, and other sources searched.	Methodology – Information Sources
	7	Search strategy	Present the full search strategy for at least one source.	Methodology – Information Sources; Appendix B
	8	Selection process	Specify the methods used to decide study eligibility and number of reviewers.	Methodology – Selection Process
	9	Data collection process	Specify the methods used to collect data from included studies.	Methodology – Data Extraction
	10a	Data items – outcomes	List and define all outcomes for which data were sought.	Methodology – Data Extraction; Appendix C
	10b	Data items – other variables	List and define all other variables for which data were sought.	Methodology – Data Extraction; Appendix C
	11	Study risk of bias assessment	Specify the methods used to assess risk of bias in included studies.	Not conducted – see Limitations
	12	Effect measures	Specify for each outcome the effect measure(s) used in the synthesis.	Not applicable – narrative synthesis
	13a	Synthesis methods – eligibility for synthesis	Describe the processes used to decide which studies were eligible for each synthesis.	Methodology – Synthesis Method

	13b	Synthesis methods – data preparation	Describe methods for preparing data for presentation or synthesis.	Methodology – Data Extraction
	13c	Synthesis methods – tabulation	Describe methods used to tabulate/visually display results.	Results; Appendix C
	13d	Synthesis methods – synthesis method	Describe methods used to synthesize results.	Methodology – Synthesis Method
	13e	Synthesis methods – heterogeneity	Describe methods used to explore heterogeneity across studies.	Results – Sources and Triggers; Discussion
	13f	Synthesis methods – sensitivity	Describe sensitivity analyses conducted.	Not applicable – narrative synthesis
	14	Reporting bias assessment	Describe methods used to assess risk of bias from missing results.	Not conducted – see Limitations
	15	Certainty assessment	Describe methods used to assess certainty in the body of evidence.	Not conducted – see Limitations
RESULTS	16a	Study selection	Describe results of the search and selection process.	Results – Study Selection; Figure 1
	16b	Study selection – excluded	Cite studies that might appear eligible but were excluded, and explain why.	Appendix D
	17	Study characteristics	Cite each included study and present its characteristics.	Results – Characteristics of Included Studies; Appendix C
	18	Risk of bias in studies	Present assessments of risk of bias for each included study.	Not conducted – see Limitations
	19	Results of individual studies	Present results for all outcomes for each study.	Results (thematic subsections); Appendix C
	20a–d	Results of syntheses	Summarize and present results of all statistical/narrative syntheses.	Results – subsections 4.3–4.6
	21	Reporting biases	Present assessment of risk of bias due to missing results.	Not conducted – see Limitations
	22	Certainty of evidence	Present assessment of certainty in the body of evidence.	Discussion; Limitations
DISCUSSION	23a–d	Discussion	Interpretation, limitations, and implications of results.	Discussion; Limitations; Conclusion
OTHER INFORMATION	24a–c	Registration and protocol	Registration information and where the protocol can be accessed.	Not pre-registered – see Limitations
	25	Support	Describe sources of financial or non-financial support.	Declarations – Funding
	26	Competing interests	Declare any competing interests.	Declarations – Conflict of Interest
	27	Availability of data, code, and materials	Report which materials are publicly available and where.	Declarations – Data Availability; Appendices B–D

Appendix B. Search and Screening Strategy

B.1 Source Repository

The review drew on a corpus of 22 records: 20 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers concerning speaking anxiety, public speaking anxiety, and foreign/second language anxiety, assembled in a curated institutional repository, and 2 additional records submitted directly for consideration. Records were published between 2018 and 2026 and indexed across sources including ERIC, GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies, Environment and Social Psychology, IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, and the International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation.

B.2 Conceptual Search Terms

Screening of the repository was guided by the following conceptual search terms and their Boolean combinations, consistent with search strategies employed in prior speaking-anxiety and foreign-language-anxiety syntheses (e.g., Dikmen, 2021): ("speaking

anxiety" OR "public speaking anxiety" OR "communication apprehension" OR "foreign language anxiety" OR "language learning anxiety") AND ("effect" OR "performance" OR "confidence" OR "communicative competence" OR "coping" OR "intervention").

B.3 Eligibility Criteria (Summary)

Inclusion: (1) speaking anxiety, including public speaking anxiety and the speaking dimension of foreign/second language anxiety, as the primary focus of the study; (2) an outcome directly related to speaking anxiety (oral/task performance, communicative confidence, coping strategies, or anxiety level); (3) peer-reviewed journal article, conference paper, or systematic review/meta-analysis; (4) full text available in English.

Exclusion: (1) speaking anxiety mentioned only incidentally or as a minor secondary outcome; (2) instrument/scale development or validation studies rather than studies of anxiety's effects; (3) speaking anxiety examined as only one of several unrelated anxiety dimensions; (4) no anxiety measure or discussion at all; (5) duplicate records.

B.4 Screening Procedure

Screening proceeded in two stages: (1) identification and review of titles, abstracts, and metadata for all 22 records, at which stage one duplicate record was identified and removed; (2) full-abstract/full-text eligibility assessment of the remaining 21 records against the criteria above, conducted independently by members of the author team and reconciled by consensus. This process is summarized in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Figure 1) and yielded 12 included studies.

Appendix C. Characteristics of Included Studies (Literature Matrix)

The table below summarizes all 12 studies included in this systematic review.

N o.	Author(s) & Year	Title	Country/Context	Study Design	Sample/Participants	Speaking Anxiety Focus	Outcome Variables	Key Findings
1	Berry et al. (2025)	A qualitative study on the effects of self-doubt on public speaking and audience reception among senior high school students	Philippines	Qualitative exploratory design; thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews	15 senior high school student speakers	Self-doubt as a driver of public speaking anxiety	Message clarity, speaker confidence, audience reception	Self-doubt operates internally (fear of judgment, lack of preparation, negative self-perception, overthinking) and externally (disorganized delivery, weak persuasive tone, nervous behaviors); coping strategies (positive self-talk, mindfulness, grounding) helped manage anxiety.
2	Quinto et al. (2025)	Analysis of constant participation in public speaking	Philippines	Qualitative; purposive sampling with open-	16 college students (intensive public	Speaking anxiety in public speaking and	Confidence, cognitive skills, growth	Intensive public speaking/debate experience built confidence through practice,

		and debate can conquer fear and gain confidence		ended questions	speakers/debaters)	debate participation	mindset, creativity	emotional regulation, and consistency, allowing students to manage anxiety and articulate thoughts more effectively; enhanced cognitive skills and growth mindset.
3	Julhamid & Julhamid (2025)	Audience Familiarization and Self-Calming Strategies in Managing Public Speaking Anxiety	Philippines	Qualitative exploratory design; Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)	18 public speakers	Public speaking anxiety (PSA) management strategies	Anxiety regulation, speaker confidence and self-trust	Audience familiarization (demographic research, cultural awareness, pre-speech interaction) reduced uncertainty and eased anxiety; self-calming techniques (deep breathing, visualization, positive affirmations) managed physiological/cognitive symptoms of PSA.
4	Ong & Zambas (2021)	A Training Design for Public Speaking Anxiety	Philippines	Research and Development (R&D); modified ADDIE (NAPCTA) model	Senior high school students and teachers	Speech/public speaking anxiety needs analysis	Anxiety level, training needs, learning-packet content	Needs analysis identified senior high school students' anxiety levels and specific needs to be addressed in speech anxiety; findings informed four learning packets forming a validated training design.
5	Villamor & Cajetas - Saranza (2025)	English Language Learning Anxieties of Last-Mile Learners As A Basis For	Philippines	Qualitative; phenomenological approach with in-depth interviews	8 Grade 7 last-mile learners	English language learning anxiety, particularly during speaking tasks and	Anxiety triggers, coping strategies, framework development	Fear of mistakes, inability to answer questions, and fear of embarrassment during speaking tasks were key

		Developing The V.O.I.C.E. Framework				assessments		negative aspects; learners coped via emotional regulation and peer/teacher support. Findings informed the V.O.I.C.E. framework to reduce anxiety.
6	Daniels et al. (2020)	Efficacy of virtual reality in reducing fear of public speaking: A systematic review	Philippines	Systematic review	14 studies (published within prior 10 years) shortlisted for review	Virtual reality exposure therapy (VRET) for public speaking anxiety (PSA)	Efficacy of anxiety reduction relative to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)	VRET can be as effective as CBT for reducing PSA and is more cost-efficient and manageable; length of time spent in VR therapy is an important factor in its efficacy.
7	Dikmen (2021)	EFL Learners' Foreign Language Learning Anxiety and Language Performance: A Meta-Analysis Study	Turkey (multi-country synthesis, 14 countries)	Meta-analysis	69 studies, N = 23,150, from 14 countries	Foreign language anxiety, including speaking anxiety as a subtype, and its relationship to EFL performance	Correlation between anxiety type (listening, test, speaking, reading, writing) and EFL performance	Overall correlation between foreign language anxiety and EFL performance was $r = -.61$; type of anxiety significantly moderated the relationship, with listening, test, and speaking anxiety showing the strongest negative associations with performance.
8	Quinto & Macayan (2019)	Exploring English Speaking Anxiety Among Filipino Engineering Students: Its Influence on Task Performance and Its Sources	Philippines	Mixed methods; explanatory sequential design	162 engineering students (quantitative phase); 9 students (qualitative interviews)	English speaking anxiety among engineering students	Speaking task performance, sources of anxiety	Significant negative relationship found between speaking anxiety and speaking task performance, indicating a debilitating influence; peers and teachers were identified as common

								sources of speaking anxiety.
9	Macayan et al. (2018)	Influence of Language Learning Anxiety on L2 Speaking and Writing of Filipino Engineering Students	Philippines	Mixed methods; explanatory sequential design	162 engineering students (quantitative phase); 9 students (qualitative interviews)	Language learning anxiety (adapted FLCAS) and its influence on L2 speaking and writing	L2 speaking performance, L2 writing performance	Anxiety significantly influenced both speaking, $F(2,162)=43.35$, $p<.001$ (debilitative), and writing, $F(2,162)=10.73$, $p<.001$ (facilitative in this context); revealed the double-edged nature of anxiety, with social comparison-driven anxiety impairing speaking but grade-anxiety-driven correction aiding writing.
10	Savellon et al. (2024)	Public speaking woes of academic leaders: resources and alternative ways to improve speaking with audience	Philippines	Qualitative; purposive sampling	20 Filipino academic leaders (basic and higher education)	Public speaking anxiety among academic leaders	Coping mechanisms, professional resources, confidence	Targeted support (professional development workshops, supportive learning environment) and coping mechanisms (regular practice, exposure to speaking opportunities) were crucial strategies for academic leaders to manage public speaking anxiety.
11	Pontillas (2020)	Reducing the Public Speaking Anxiety of ESL College Students Through Popsispeak	Philippines	One-shot case study; pre-test/post-test (quasi-experimental) with thematic analysis	28 ESL college students	Public speaking anxiety measured via Personal Report of Public Speaking	Public speaking anxiety level, oral communication skills	Popsispeak intervention significantly reduced students' public speaking anxiety and improved oral communication

						Anxiety (PRPSA)		skills; a significant negative correlation was found between public speaking anxiety and oral communication skills.
12	Astrero et al. (2024)	English Language Competence, Communicative Competence, and Public Speaking Anxiety of Pre-service Teachers	Philippines	Quantitative descriptive survey	72 pre-service teachers (BSEd-English, BSEd-Math, BSEd-Science, BEEd), Northeastern College	Public speaking classroom anxiety (PSCAS, adapted from Yaikhong & Usaha, 2012), alongside English language and communicative competence	Public speaking anxiety level, self-assessed English competence, self-perceived communicative competence	Pre-service teachers were overall moderately anxious (Grand Mean=3.19); anxiety peaked when required to speak without preparation and was marked by physiological symptoms such as heart pounding (M=3.67); despite academic exposure, many struggled to retain information and stay calm while speaking; structured interventions (workshops, supportive feedback environment, relaxation techniques, peer-led practice) were recommended to reduce PSA.