

# Glossophobic Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers in their Oral Presentations: Causes and Strategies

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## ABSTRACT

The study on speaking anxiety among learners has been a compelling focus among educators and researchers in the recent years. An interest is also geared towards glossophobic experiences of students who are pre-service teachers as they are to be educated to be developed as speakers. This research then determined the causes of speaking anxiety among the pre-service teachers at Mountain Province State Polytechnic College-Teacher Education Department (MPSPC-TED). Phenomenological design was utilized with focused on the lived experiences of the participants in their research oral presentations, oral lesson demonstrations, and oral speaking presentations; observation, and samples of interview output are the primary sources of data. These were transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted. Identified causes are grouped into four major themes: language obstacles, audience manifestation, lack of mastery of the topic, and particular motives. Knowing these causes of problems, strategies were then suggested to ensure support in addressing such anxiety.

## Keywords

speaking, pre-service teachers, language communication skills, speaking anxiety, stratagems

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## Background of the Study

Many people have been overwhelmed with an assortment of often unbearable fears and anxieties such as glossophobia on communicating with others especially in a public performance setting such as pre-service teachers in their speaking performances in class. Glossophobia is a speech anxiety, which is the feeling of fear the researchers witnessed from students when talking with their classmates, often characterized as an anxiety of talking publicly or uneasiness in communication. There was an obvious feeling of panic among them like breathing rates, over-rapid responses, trembling of muscles, and slurring of voices, among others.

Glossophobia comes from 'glosso' meaning tongue, and phobia meaning threat or fear (Ali & Nagar, 2013, p. 21). Fear of public speaking is reflected as a terror type in the society which leads to unembellished avoidance of speaking in front of the people due to fear of discomfort or even degradation. This fear is considered a type of social phobia having great social importance, people with public speaking fear face great difficulty in pursuing their career goals and promotion, and this may cause frustration, depression, and distress in their personality (Slater & Barker, 2002). Moreover, glossophobia, along with presentation nervousness, communication

uneasiness, stage fright, or fear of negative inference is characterized under social anxiety. People should need to understand that they are not the only ones who may be going through these kinds of emotions; in fact, every speaker feels the same. Students need to knowingly comprehend that there are more anxious speakers in the world than those who are not.

With the aforementioned discussions, the study then identified what causes glossophobia among the MPSPC pre-service teachers and to help them by allowing a careful consciousness of the reasons that cause their problems. An improved understanding of the indications may be important for strategic action in addressing glossophobia.

## Review of Literature

Studies have acknowledged that fear of speaking as an important type of social dread that affects performance. Consequently, students who are afraid of speaking openly face numerous challenges in following their profession goals and found a narrow degree for advancements, which is an indication of extensive individual agony, dissatisfaction, and gloominess (Pertaub and Barker, 2002, p. 68). To note, a study shows that about 21% of of their participants even suffer from glossophobia, for them, it may be tremendous and a reason for great depression or

avoidance (Ruscio, et al., 2008, p. 18). Participants who have such problems are unable to establish their skills in diverse social circumstances, they feel uncomfortable and not only are afraid of mistaken estimation by others but also humiliation. While they are conscious that this fear is baseless, they still suffer from severe anxiety in the dreaded situation, as a result, they continually flee themselves from the situation where they have to speak in public (Pertaub & Barker, 2002).

Relatively, talking is an interactive and complex course of building meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing the information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its forms and meanings are dependent on the situation in which it occurs, including the participants, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purpose of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Very unsatisfactory ratings in studies also is the outcome of fear in public speaking among students, in overcoming this fear, they escape to be familiar to this circumstances, eventually, this fear is a problem in the students' career chance which might involve public speaking (Strahan, 2003; Perveen, Hasan, & Aleemi, 2018). The mastery of a public speaking skill is a priority for every teacher because speaking can be regarded as the mode of communication, which is mostly used to express opinions, transmit information, and make impressions on others (Bustos, et al., 2015). It is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of symbols verbally and non-verbally. Fluency in English speaking is important to minimize the speaking phobia. Students should have fluency in this language to communicate in classroom discussion; though Filipinos are known to be good at the use of English, it is quite alarming that there is already a decrease of competence in the English language oral skills

among students nowadays (Orbeta & San Jose, 2013).

Research confirms that pressure of risk of public embarrassment has long been recognized as sources of unproductive tension among many students. There were indications of an increase in the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among students in colleges and universities that includes categories of students who are deployed as student interns, students having oral research defense, and students complying for the requirement of the subject in oral communication skills (Bustos, et al., 2017; Fagsao, 2019). Concerning this, it is very obvious that glossophobia is the major problem that instructors are concerned about, that is why research studies related to this study are being conducted year in year out in every college and university.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study followed the phenomenological design focused on the lived experiences of pre-service teachers in MPSPC in terms of glossophobia in the classroom. Creswell (2013) describes the phenomenological study as the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. This design elucidates the meaning and structure as well as the essence of the lived experiences of the students around this specific phenomenon. Personal interviews, actual observations, free responses, and flexibility were attained with by other procedures to as data collection for equal in-depth information.

The pre-service teachers were considered appropriate participants for this study as they are the future educators of tomorrow. The interview was conducted last semester SY- 2018-2019 at the Teacher Education Faculty Room 103, MPSPC-Bontoc Campus, Bontoc, Mountain Province. (see Table 1) for the distribution of respondents.

**Table 1:** Distribution of BEED and BSED Pre-service Teachers

Course	Gender		Subject
	Male	Female	
BSED- Social Studies	2	5	Research in Social Studies
BSED-English	6	7	Language Research
BSED-Math	1	1	Research in Mathematics
BSED-Science	0	1	Research in Science
BSED-English	5	9	Speech and Stage Arts/ Oral communication

BEED	2	6	Practice Teaching
BSED-English	2	6	Practice Teaching
	18	32	
TOTAL	50		

The key instrument of data collection consists of interview guides based on priori codes which also validated the interview questions as well as the interview results on glossophobia in oral skills presentation and the causes of their fear and anxiety as observed during oral performances.

Another key instrument is the face-to-face interview exploring and discovering the participants' feelings towards glossophobia while doing the oral skills action.

The following procedures were sequentially followed in the conduct of the study:

**Phase 1:** Permission to undergo interviews and observations was obtained by the researchers from the teachers-in-charge, panel of evaluators, and advisers.

**Phase 2:** Permission to undergo an interview was approved by the requested students to ensure the confidentiality of their identities. The names used in this study are not specified. Sessions of observation took place over the second semester, 2018-2019 (specifically on January 22nd, 24th and February 5th). The observations involved whole class observations where the pre-service teachers did an actual teaching demo.

**Phase 3:** Face to face interviews with pre-service teachers in their most appropriate time inside the faculty room after office hours. The BSED interns were immediately interviewed after being observed from their actual teaching demonstrations from their respective schools of affiliation. Video-audio from cell phones were used aside from field notes to record every session transpired during the interview. Answers and opinions were highly appreciated and kept confidential.

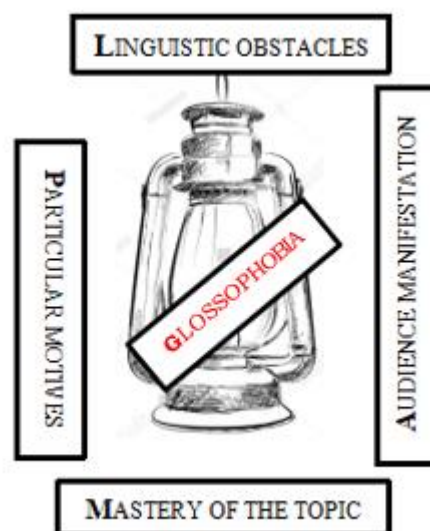
**Phase 4:** Data were transcribed, analyzed, coded, and identified. From the results, themes emanated representing the glossophobic experiences of the pre-service teachers.

## PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The study shows that the glossophobia of pre-service teachers emanates from various factors, intrinsic and extrinsic. The causes are categorized on the acronym of **LAMP** which refers to **L**inguistic Barriers, **A**udience's Manifestation, lack of **M**astery of the Topic, and **P**articular Reasons similar from Bustos, et al.'s (2015) rendition. These factors are presented in the figure below.

### Factors of Glossophobic Experiences of BEED and BSED Pre-service Teachers

*Figure 1. Factors of Glossophobic Experiences of BEED and BSED Pre-service Teachers at MPSPC*



### Linguistic Obstacles

Common linguistic barriers of communication of pre-service teachers at MPSPC are errors on pronunciation and grammar, and limited vocabulary.

**Errors on Pronunciation.** Most pre-service teachers in English that were observed possess pronunciation inaccuracies. The occurrence is commonly observed about their regional uniqueness in pronunciation, common in some places in Mountain Province. Such are observed on their articulation of specific sounds like /i/ in "eggs", "set", and "ten" which should have been different. It was accepted that this regional uniqueness has an effect among the

respondents on expressing English words while delivering lessons. Ironically, they are majoring in English such occurrence regarding pronunciation heighten their glossophobia. As students expressed their sentiments during the face-to-face session, one laments:

*"I am sorry, sir, I know that you are disappointed with my pronunciation...Pronouncing the words during the demonstration is difficult for me because of my regional "defect" [uniqueness]. The fact that I am an English teacher, this is really my worst problem; (that) I do not know to solve (it). It affects my confidence in teaching especially when I am being observed by a critic teacher like you"* (interview by the researchers, January 2019, Barlig National High School, Barlig, Mt. Province).

Another made a revelation and expressed (changes on the structure was done by the researchers):

*"...when I finished my speech as my final examination, the room was unobtrusive. I was so dumb dead when the teacher pointed out that, "that is the absolute worst thing I have ever heard." Now, I see that to be the most upsetting experience I ever had, and I am worried whether I will pass the subject or not"* (interview with a student in an Oral Communication subject, May 2019).

Series of studies like Bustos, et al. (2015) and Subasi's (2010) show that significant reasons leading to high anxiety cover are the attention to intonation and pronunciation, the motivation, and the interference of first language features.

To date, good communication skills are needed in every walks of life. Raja (2013) mentioned that, "[using] communication through the use of language has developed social harmony, social status, and professional competencies [among men]." (p. 154). Language-communication plays a major role in developing a relationship. It can also affect the relationship between teachers and students in any classroom setting. More specially, communication inspires the usefulness of teaching, performance assessment, and the management of discipline problems. It should also be direct even though there are barriers that make it complex, difficult, and frustrating to ensure.

**Errors on Grammar.** The tendency to commit errors on grammar in speaking task causes

the pre-service teachers conducting their demo too conscious and avoids to talk continually. For some, they have strategies to cope with such as deviating to speak more even if it is needed or to code switch.

A Math major student expressed:

*...when it comes to grammar, I do admit that I always commit grammatical errors which is the reason I usually use code-switching in my teaching skills. What matters most is that my students can gradually grasp every lesson I teach to them. So far, I has (have) never been embarrassed in class with regards to my grammar; but I know I do commit grammatical errors (interview with a Math major pre-service teacher, January 2019, MPSPC Faculty room).*

Indeed, grammar is one of the most challenging aspects to master particularly for students majoring in the English language. Close (1992, p. 13) discussed that English grammar has been traditionally viewed to be "a system of the syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged in sentences". Celce-Murcia (2002, p. 121) argued that mastering grammar is a difficult procedure that involves "making a series of decisions about when and why to use one form rather than the other". Most students seem to be concerned about making the right decisions when speaking or writing in the second language (L2) that requires grammatical proficiency.

**Limited Vocabulary.** Some pre-service teachers who are so anxious and nervous are observed to be at a loss of words while discussing in class.

A student shared that:

*...the vocabulary is a crucial aspect of teaching because it pressures me during the lesson when there are words' semantic meaning not clearly given when asked by some students. Also, with the lack of vocabulary knowledge, I find it difficult because many of us student-teachers do not even know where to begin or at times we experience that thing "tip of the tongue". Like I know the word but it doesn't come out of my mouth when I am teaching (interview by the researchers with an English major pre-service teacher, MPGCHS, January 2019).*

Gruneberg and Sykes (1991) distinguished the two types of vocabulary which are the active and the passive vocabulary. The former type of vocabulary referred to the one that the students had been taught and that they were expected to be



able to use. Meanwhile, the second one referred to the words which the students would identify when they encounter them, but they would probably not be able to say. Also, Hatch and Brown (1995) indicated two kinds of vocabulary, namely as receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary.

Receptive vocabulary means words that learners recognize and understand when they are used in context, but which they cannot produce. As Stuart (2008) expressed that this receptive type of vocabulary is what learners recognize when they see or meet in reading a text but do not use it in speaking and writing. Meanwhile, productive vocabulary refers to the words that the learners comprehend and are able to articulate appropriately and use practically in speaking and writing. It contains what is needed for receptive vocabulary plus the capability to speak or write at the appropriate time. Productive vocabulary is an active process because it is here where the learners can produce the words in expressing their thoughts to others.

Moreover, Gynan (1989, cited in Young 1991) found that vocabulary is considered the most important followed by pronunciation in language learning practice of students. In some other Asian countries, students usually lose confidence when encountering unknown words. Consequently, English teachers have to teach vocabulary before transporting on to interpretation or listening texts. Cheng's (1997) study, some of the English majors were found to experience more anxiety than the non-English majors due to the fact that they expected that as English majors, they should not make grammatical mistakes and should know every word when listening to English.

### **Audience's Manifestation: Negative/Negating Attitude of Listeners**

The scenario of "stage fright" and "shyness" in front of people are manifested by pre-service teachers. This experience is commonly observed in the respondents especially when they seem that the presence of a crowd is much intimidating towards them. In this factor, the presence of some students, critic teachers as well as the principal, panel members, and advisers are the source of the respondents' glossophobia.

One reason that causes a glossophobia among the respondents is the thorny issues observed in the classroom. This is the disturbing student's misbehaviors composed of disruptive

talking, talking out of turn, being silly, interfering with speaking activities, un-accepted facial expressions, verbal offenses, rudeness to the pre-service teacher, disobedience, and antagonism.

Some respondents reported that (edited by the researchers):

*"...there are normal issues that cause anxiety to me in the classroom that consists of unbearable and stress-provoking behaviours of my students. I have to devote a boundless deal of patience, drive, and period to manage the whole class. Clearly, students' misbehaviours impede the evenness and usefulness of my teaching and also delay the learning inside the classroom. I felt embarrassed when I hear some murmuring repetitions of grammatical mistakes I committed. The worst is, I can also witness some of them sporting some unwanted facial expressions in front of me"* (interview with some selected pre-service teachers by the researchers, February 2019).

Most pre-service teachers were interviewed regarding student misbehaviors and they attributed some of these experiences causing them anxious towards their students. The researchers classified it as Talking-out-of-turn. This is another speaking challenge behaviour mainly referring to students chatting among themselves on irrelevant teasing remarks towards their teachers.

A BSED pre-service teacher of English commented that:

*"...if I ask them to refrain from such behaviour, they are rebellious and insist to behave the other way round. They will not listen to me. They will insist to do what they think...anyway, this will be a challenge to me"* (interview by the researchers, January 2019).

Some BSED student-teachers exemplified that disrespectful means rudeness, talking back, and provoking teachers. As similarly remarked pre-service teachers interviewed in MPGCHS, Sabangan National High School, and Albago National High School.

*"...occasionally they will even argue against us...just because we are only practice teachers"* (interview by the researchers February 2019).

*"...a student always gives irrelevant answers to my question, that is, I asked a thoughtful question but this student gave a 'prank' answer with a frown on his face. If I commented on him, he*

would be furious and unreceptive against me” (interview by the researchers January 2019).

“...when disagreeing, students typically had poor attitudes, particularly the boys in one of my classes. Later, I would scold at them, and they would become argumentative...” (Interview by the researchers January 2019).

“...more seriously, they would express their resentment by murmuring such unacceptable sounds. But this situation was not quite always” (interview by the researchers January 2019).

Some BEED pre-service teachers added that some of the aforementioned problem behaviours, such as that were commonly found among the elementary pupils. A pre-service teacher in Bontoc Central School mentioned that:

“...some pupils had problems in getting along with their classmates. When other classmates had wrong answers, they would immediately call out and point out their mistakes. This in fact somewhat affected the whole class” (interview by the researchers, BCS, February 2019).

Among several audience’s behaviors which cause glossophobia reported, relatively some students pointed out that “having disturbing chat” was the most common and the most disruptive factor when defending one’s research thesis. A pre-service teacher explained that.

“...chatting during my presentation affects me most... chatting will alter the oral presentation setting atmosphere as well as oral presentation progress. Even there were few spectators in the presentation room, their low voice can cause anxiety to me (interview by the researchers, January 2019).

Another problem that causes glossophobia is “shyness” which differs importantly from individual to individual, and from situation to situation. This type of problem occurs in cases where learners lack established communication skills in speaking towards the audience. For instance, in a teacher-researchers’ perception of “shyness” experience, he expressed that:

“... the most problem I can’t fix. No matter how and what I do, when shyness appears I cannot voice out what is inside me. I tremble when I know that I’m going to speak in front of people” (interview by the researchers, TED faculty room, March 2019)

Also, in some occurrences, students have a submissive nature and they tend to feel uncomfortable while speaking in front of others.

These findings are supported when one of the panel members encouraged the researchers to be heartened first in their initial phase of presentation and such engaging phase stimulated them to defend their research orally in defense sessions with ease and articulation.

In contrast, Weissman (2012) explains why some speakers do speak faster when in front of the audience. According to him, the pressure of the situation stimulates adrenaline rush which produces time distort that causes a presenter to experience glossophobia.

### **Lack of Mastery of the Topic**

Among the students observed, lack of mastery of the topic is the most mutual cause of their glossophobia. Consistent observation during an oral defense, lack of preparation in their presentations did contribute to activating their glossophobia. Mastery of the topic determines the depth of understanding regarding a person’s knowledge or skill. Glossophobia occurs when there is a problem of a lack of mastery towards the topic within a certain speaker which in turn affects the confidence in preparation and consequently on delivery.

Asked why from the students who did their research defense about the matter, one of the presenters answered:

“...it is well obvious that my delivery is very unsatisfactory to the panel members. If I were to rate myself, I can say that the lack of preparation made me experienced anxiety. I just only read what was in the PPT without maintaining direct contact and my rate of speech was too soft and monotonous” (interview by the researchers with BSED-SS student, MPSPC, room 302, March 2019).

The comment of one of the panel members is supported by the suggestion of Songsiri (2007) that states if students are motivated and are assisted with various strategies for the accomplishment of their goals at their own pace, not only improve, redeem and repose confidence, but also become autonomous and lifelong learners.

### **Particular Motives**

Each respondent gave their own personal opinions related to the causes of glossophobia that comes within themselves. This refers to glossophobia experienced by the respondents which were

caused by their own being. Throughout the interviews, the researchers found out common responses from them which is related to this theme are podium panic and shame.

Everyone could experience podium panics and shame related to stage fright, speech anxiety, or talking terror. This is what one experience prior to and during the oral speaking in front of an audience. Also, out of the 50 respondents, most of them accepts the matter to be true. As a result, a student in Language Research revealed that (edited by the researchers):

*"...stage fright is a common feeling experienced by anybody especially if it's your first time to be exposed in a crowd. I mean this is common when one was selected to defend one's research. I suggest that only those who did a major impact in the research manuscript will be the one to present to avoid fear and anxiety" (interview by the researchers, March 2019).*

The student's revelation could be made by reasons of having stage frights and shame because of committing grammatical errors, lacking strategic styles in presentations, having regional accents and colloquialism, and discomfort with your one's physical appearance. These would cause negative impacts such as being laughed at with the mistakes and make verbal or non-verbal reactions to the part of the respondents, especially in the English language class.

### Strategies in coping Glossophobia

From the observed students' experiences, the researchers suggested some strategies that would help solve the glossophobia with the acronym **DISRUPT**. Disrupt means to stop (see Figure 2). This study attests that fear of public speaking is a learned skill and can be overcome by practicing and rehearsing before presentations. The subsequent strategies can help the students overcome speaking anxiety:

- (a) **D**iaphragmatic breathing practice should be learned. It will help reduce and release the contradiction in the solar plexus associated with fear and anxiety. It also helps to relax the speech so that you will not be obviously anxious.
- (b) **I**nvolve the listeners (such as the students, and panel members). Research indicates empathy or a

feeling of mutual support between speakers and listeners is the surest relief from stage fright. Once the speaker receives that first positive reaction from an audience, he/she will suddenly feel much more confident and relaxed.

- (c) **S**eek advice of the audience during practice periods or can ask somebody to record the talk. Viewing it a number of times for self-criticism also enable the learning and development process. The speakers should expect audience responses and questions that may be produced during preparation so that they could have confidence.
- (d) **R**ecognize and admit success. It may not have been perfect, but chances are that speakers are far more critical of themselves than the listeners are.
- (e) **U**nderstanding the topic removes the chance of making a mistake or getting off the track during a public speaking activity. A moment of silence is nothing to be afraid of. If the speakers lose track of what they are saying or begin to feel nervous, it is likely that the audience will not mind a pause to consider what they have been saying. Practicing complete speech several times would certainly give the speaker an edge. A speaker can practice it with a small number of people they are at ease with.
- (f) **P**repare, Practice, Prepare. Clearly, if the speaker prepares his/her topic carefully he/she will greatly reduce his/her concern about what he/she is going to say. If the speakers specially the pre-service teachers prepare effectively then they feel more like they are really ready to speak. Their ideas will be firmly set in mind. Preparation and practice will help them be confident for nothing beats preparation.

- (g) **Take Time** to use the right joke at the right time. Humor really helps with this. The audience will appreciate speakers' honesty and will be drawn to for it.

## CONCLUSION

The ability to present oneself in front of an audience and the knowledge of the target language matter a lot for ease and confidence in speaking. This is revealed by those pre-service teachers who have experienced glossophobia. Specifically, glossophobia is caused by: (a) linguistic obstacles, (b) audience's manifestations: negative or positive, (c) lack of mastery of the topic, and (d) personal motives (**LAMP**). The audience manifestations that are negative are considered to be the primary ones. Linguistic obstacles, particular motives, and lack of mastery respectively. Such factors are manifested on podium panic and shame caused by self-consciousness in front of large groups, concern that others are judging them, past failures and embarrassments, and poor or insufficient preparation. To ensure a support for the pre-service teachers in their oral performances, the strategies are geared towards students building confidence and practice of establishing rapport to go ahead and speak in front. This is presented with the acronym **DISRUPT**.

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