

ORAL COMMUNICATION ABILITY IN ENGLISH AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT AMONG GRADE 12 HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES STUDENTS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

Novy Rhean Lara

Sto. Tomas National High School

novyrheanlr@gmail.com

Khristine Joyce T. Rodriguez

Sto. Tomas National High School

khristinejoyce.rodriguez@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students at Sto. Tomas National High School, Davao del Norte, Philippines. Recognizing the critical role of communication ability in academic success, the study adopts a quantitative correlational design to explore how these variables interact. A sample of 197 students was evaluated using two instruments: the "Oral Communication Ability in English" questionnaire (Idrus et al., 2011) and the "Students Engagement in School Questionnaire" (SESQ) (Hart et al., 2011), which assessed various aspects of oral communication and learning engagement. Drawing upon Self-determination Theory (SDT), Dweck's Mindset Theory, and Connectivism Learning Theory (CLT), the study emphasizes how competence, growth-oriented mindsets, and social connectivity foster engagement. Results reveal that the students' oral communication ability scored an overall mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.69), interpreted as "some extent," with aspirations receiving the highest mean score (3.94) and aptitude the lowest (2.97). Learning engagement recorded an overall mean of 3.61 (SD = 0.66), interpreted as "agree," with affective engagement scoring the highest (3.79) and behavioral engagement the lowest (3.40). A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.524$, $p < 0.001$) was found between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement, indicating a moderate relationship. This study highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve communication skills and engagement, such as collaborative workshops and teacher-led initiatives. Future research should address limitations, such as the reliance on self-reported data, and explore additional factors influencing learning engagement.

Keywords: oral communication ability in English, learning engagement, Humanities and Social Sciences, senior high school

INTRODUCTION

Effective oral communication is a cornerstone of the educational process, serving as a key determinant of students' learning engagement and overall academic success. It enables learners to express their ideas clearly, participate actively in discussions, and connect meaningfully with peers and educators. However, many students struggle with articulating their thoughts and actively engaging in classroom discussions, which negatively impact their academic performance and

engagement. For senior high school students, particularly those in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand, strong communication skills are vital as they engage with complex social issues, diverse perspectives, and critical thinking development (Soreño & Valle, 2024).

Globally, research underscores the significance of communication skills in education. In Singapore, studies have shown that communication within collaborative learning environments fosters student engagement and motivation (Hu et al., 2020). Similarly, clear thinking, attentive listening, and effective interaction with peers and teachers are essential for meaningful learning (Ahmed, 2022). Strong communication abilities have also been linked to active classroom participation and higher academic achievement across different educational contexts (Moja, 2023).

In the Philippines, the development of oral communication skills among students remains a challenge, affecting their learning engagement and academic performance (Ponce-Gonzalez et al., 2020). Large class sizes, limited access to resources, and gaps in teacher training have been identified as key barriers to developing effective communication skills (Messmore & Davis, 2020). Locally, studies in Mindanao highlight the difficulty of Filipino students in mastering English communication, particularly in public high schools where instructional resources and exposure to English-speaking environments are limited (De Guzman & Ramos, 2021). A study conducted by Manuel (2022) in Cagayan revealed that students in senior high school often experience anxiety and lack of confidence in oral communication, which hinders their engagement in class discussions.

The situation is even more pressing in Davao del Norte, where educational outcomes have consistently fallen below the national average. According to the Commission on Higher Education [CHED] (2019), challenges in oral communication are among the major barriers to student success in the province. At Santo Tomas National High School (STNHS), teachers have reported that students' reluctance to participate in discussions is often due to a lack of confidence in using English as a medium of instruction. This trend has raised concerns among educators, policymakers, and researchers, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to improve communication skills among students.

This study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. By focusing on the relationship between oral communication ability and learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students at Santo Tomas National High School, this research aims to contribute to improving educational outcomes in the region. Specifically, it seeks to provide local insights and practical strategies for enhancing communication skills and fostering active engagement in learning. Findings from this study can serve as a foundation for curriculum development, teacher training, and policy recommendations aimed at strengthening oral communication competencies in senior high school students.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of communication ability and learning engagement of Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in Sto. Tomas National High School. Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. determine the level of oral communication ability in English among Grade 12 HUMSS students at STNHS in terms of:
 - 1.2 aptitude;
 - 1.3 attitude; and

1.4 aspirations.

2. determine the level of learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students at STNHS in terms of:

2.1 affective engagement;

2.2 behavioral engagement; and

2.3 cognitive engagement.

3. determine the significant relationship between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students.

Review of Related Literature

The ability to communicate effectively is essential in today's educational landscape, serving as a foundation for both student engagement and academic success. This review explores the relationship between oral communication skills and learning engagement, particularly among Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students at Santo Tomas National High School (STNHS). By examining diverse studies and frameworks, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing communication ability and engagement, while identifying strategies for improvement.

Communication ability encompasses the capacity to express ideas, thoughts, and information effectively through verbal, written, and non-verbal means. Gordon (2024) highlights that feedback can be verbal, non-verbal, or behavioral, ensuring that the communication loop is complete and that any misinterpretations are addressed.

Research underscores the importance of communication in diverse contexts. For instance, Ordoubadi (2023) explores predictors of communication ability, focusing on communication apprehension and privacy preferences among second language learners. The findings suggest that low self-esteem hinders willingness to communicate, thereby impacting overall communication ability. Moreover, Riggio (2024) advocates for integrated frameworks that promote emotional and social communication skills, which are critical for enhancing student engagement and success.

Aptitude significantly influences the development of communication skills, particularly in language learning. Dörnyei (2005) identifies linguistic aptitude—including phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, and rote learning—as key factors in mastering communication. Individuals with higher cognitive aptitude can better interpret social cues and adapt their messages to specific audiences (O'Keefe, 2006). This ability enables them to engage more effectively in interpersonal and academic contexts.

Attitude plays a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to communicate (WTC) and their overall engagement. Studies indicate that positive attitudes toward communication are linked to improved learning outcomes. For example, Tork et al. (2018) found that nursing students in Saudi Arabia exhibited moderate positive attitudes toward communication skills, recognizing their importance in professional practice. Similarly, Wang et al. (2017) revealed that high school students' WTC in China was influenced by language proficiency and classroom environment. These findings highlight the impact of attitudes on both academic and personal development.

Students' aspirations are closely linked to their communication skills. Research by Valls et al. (2022) shows that effective communication enhances students' ability to articulate career goals and engage with mentors. Onyekuru (2019) similarly emphasizes the role of communication in

shaping vocational interests and career pathways. These findings suggest that fostering communication skills can significantly contribute to students' long-term aspirations and well-being.

Learning engagement refers to the degree of students' interest and involvement in academic activities. According to a study, student engagement is the vitality and effort that students employ within their learning community, observable via any number of behavioral, cognitive or affective indicators across a continuum. It is shaped by a variety of structural and internal influences, including the complex interplay of relationships, learning activities, and the learning environment (Barkley, 2010).

Affective engagement focuses on students' emotional responses to their learning environment, including feelings of interest, happiness, or anxiety. According to Li et al. (2022), emotions significantly influence students' motivation and learning strategies. External factors such as teacher and peer support also shape affective engagement. Peng et al. (2022) found that supportive relationships positively correlate with students' emotional engagement, enhancing their academic performance. Creating a nurturing learning environment is therefore crucial for fostering positive emotional experiences and sustained engagement.

Behavioral engagement involves students' participation in class activities, adherence to norms, and effort in learning tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004). Greenwood et al. (2002) identify behavioral engagement as a reliable predictor of academic success. Actively participating in classroom activities and demonstrating consistent effort are strongly associated with better educational outcomes. Strategies to improve behavioral engagement include interactive teaching methods and clear expectations for student participation.

Cognitive engagement reflects students' psychological investment in learning. It involves deep-learning strategies, self-regulation, and higher-order thinking skills (Richards, 2023; Yin, 2024). Students who engage cognitively are more likely to connect new information with prior knowledge and apply critical thinking to problem-solving. However, many students lack familiarity with cognitive strategies, which can hinder their motivation and learning outcomes. Encouraging the use of metacognitive tools and reflective practices can enhance cognitive engagement (Agustini et al., 2022).

Research consistently demonstrates a strong link between communication skills and learning engagement. Hattie et al. (2007) argue that effective communication fosters interactive learning environments, enhancing students' motivation and academic performance. Zepke et al. (2010) similarly found that students with strong communication skills are more likely to participate actively in discussions and exhibit higher engagement levels.

From a global perspective, Kuh (2009) highlights the role of communication in building a sense of community within classrooms, which is essential for engagement. In the Philippine context, challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources hinder students' communication development (CHED, 2019). Addressing these challenges aligns with SDG Goal No. 4 by promoting inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities.

Fredricks et al. (2024) emphasize that confidence in communication skills enhances students' ability to engage in collaborative activities, benefiting both individual and group learning outcomes. Barkley (2010) further suggests that interactive teaching methods, such as group work

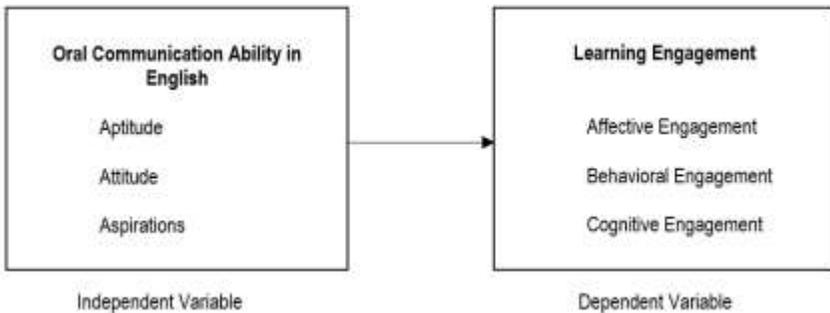
and discussions, create engaging learning environments that improve students' academic commitment.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Ryan and Deci (2000). Self-Determination Theory helps understand how students' motivation and communication ability are interconnected. In the context of oral communication, students who perceive themselves as competent speakers are more likely to engage in class discussions, seek clarification from teachers, and collaborate with peers. The theory suggests that when students feel confident in their ability to express themselves, their motivation to participate in learning activities increases, leading to higher levels of engagement. Furthermore, providing students with opportunities to freely express their thoughts fosters a sense of autonomy and relatedness, reinforcing the role of communication in building social connections within the classroom (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

In addition, Dweck's (2006) Mindset Theory posits that students with a growth mindset those who believe abilities can be developed through effort are more likely to persist in challenging tasks. This concept applies to oral communication ability, as students who receive positive reinforcement and constructive feedback from teachers are more likely to perceive their communication skills as improvable rather than fixed.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study



Lastly, the Connectivism Learning Theory of Siemens (2005) provides understanding on how communication ability and learning engagement are intertwined, especially in the context of the digital age. In context, HUMSS students frequently engage in discussions, debates, and collaborative tasks that require strong communication skills. According to CLT, learning is enhanced through connections with diverse perspectives and sources of information (Downes, 2012). Students with strong oral communication skills can better articulate their ideas, interpret information, and actively participate in discussions, leading to deeper engagement in learning.

Presented in Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the variables of the study. The first box contains the independent variable of the study, which refers to the communication ability in English, while the second box contains the dependent variable of the study, which refers to the learning engagement.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a correlational research design to examine the relationship between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students. A correlational research design is appropriate when investigating the degree to which two or more variables are related (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design allows researchers to identify statistical patterns and associations between variables without manipulating them, making it particularly suitable for educational studies where naturally occurring behaviors are examined (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

In the context of this study, the correlational approach was selected to assess whether oral communication ability significantly influences students' learning engagement in the classroom. Given that effective communication is often linked to active participation and motivation in learning (Kahu, 2013), this design enables an objective analysis of how students' ability to express themselves in English correlates with their academic engagement. Thus, this study employs a quantitative, correlational design to provide empirical evidence on the role of oral communication ability in fostering student engagement.

This study was conducted in Sto. Tomas National High School, Division of Davao del Norte, located in Barangay Tibal-og. This place was chosen because of the wide range of data for analysis. The data for this study were collected from Grade 12 HUMSS students at STNHS through survey questionnaires. This study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025.

This study's target population included Grade 12 students enrolled in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand at Sto. Tomas National High School during the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025. This group was chosen because senior high school students in the HUMSS strand are required to develop strong oral communication skills as part of their curriculum. Previous research has shown that learning engagement is closely related to communication competence, making this population ideal for investigating the relationship between oral communication ability and learning engagement (Kahu, 2013).

The sample size was calculated using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, which recommended a minimum of 197 participants based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sample size had enough statistical power to detect associations between oral communication ability and learning engagement (Field, 2022). This study used a random selection process to ensure that the sample accurately represented the larger Grade 12 HUMSS population at Sto. Tomas National High School, thus increasing the reliability and validity of the results.

The researchers used two (2) instruments to gather the data for this study. To determine the communication ability of Grade 12 HUMSS students, the researchers utilized and adopted the questionnaire by Idrus et al., (2011) entitled "Oral Communication Ability in English". On the other hand, to determine the level of learning engagement of Grade 12 HUMSS students, the researchers utilized and adopted the questionnaire by Hart et al., (2011) entitled "Students Engagement in School Questionnaire (SESQ)".

The researchers sought approval from the School Principal and Senior High School Focal Person of Sto. Tomas National High School through a formal authorization letter. Once granted, they

coordinated with the classroom advisers and subject teachers to access Grade 12 HUMSS classes. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained, ensuring participants understood the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participation was voluntary, and students could withdraw at any time without consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To uphold confidentiality, responses were anonymized, and data were securely stored. Ethical guidelines for human subject research were strictly followed. These measures safeguarded participant privacy and ensured research integrity (Bryman, 2021).

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results, analysis, and interpretation of the gathered data regarding oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students are presented. Based on the results presented, the overall mean score for oral communication ability in English among the participants is 3.31, with a standard deviation of 0.69. This score falls within the "some extent" range, providing a general perspective on students' abilities in English oral communication. It implies that students possess moderate oral communication ability in English, with some room for improvement.

Table 1
Level of Oral Communication Ability in English

| Oral Communication Ability in English | Mean | Standard Deviation | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Aptitude | 2.97 | 0.68 | Some Extent |
| Attitude | 3.03 | 0.86 | Some Extent |
| Aspiration | 3.94 | 1.13 | Great Extent |
| Overall | 3.31 | 0.69 | Some Extent |

On one hand, the highest average mean of oral communication ability in English is aspiration with a mean score of 3.94 which pertains to question number 1, *"One of my main goals is to be much better at speaking in English by next year"*. It shows that it falls within the "great extent" scale interval. This means that the students' communication ability is very good. On the other hand, the lowest average mean is aptitude with a mean score of 2.97 which correspond with the question number 5, *"I always think I am good at speaking in English"*. This score shows a moderate level of self-confidence in students' English-speaking abilities.

Table 2
Level of Learning Engagement

| Learning Engagement | Mean | Standard Deviation | Descriptive Equivalent |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Affective Engagement | 3.79 | 0.89 | Agree |
| Behavioral Engagement | 3.40 | 0.67 | Agree |
| Cognitive Engagement | 3.63 | 0.71 | Agree |
| Overall | 3.61 | 0.66 | Agree |

Presented in Table 2 are the indicators that measured the level of learning engagement. The result revealed an overall mean score of 3.61, with a standard deviation of 0.66. This score falls within the “agree” range; it shows that students are emotionally invested in and motivated toward their learning experiences.

On one hand, the highest average mean of learning engagement is affective engagement with a mean score of 3.79 which pertains to question number 4, “*I enjoy learning new things in class*”. It shows that it falls within the “agree” scale interval. This means that the level of learning engagement of the student is high. On the other hand, the lowest average mean is behavioral engagement with a mean score of 3.40 which correspond with question number 12, “*I take an active role in extracurricular activities in my school.*” This score shows that students generally display appropriate behaviors that support their learning, such as participation and attentiveness.

Table 3
Significant Relationship between Oral Communication Ability in English and Learning Engagement

| Variables | Pearson r | Significance | Hypothesis |
|---|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Oral Communication Ability in English - Learning Engagement | .524 | .000 | Reject Ho |

Upon examining the correlation between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement, the correlation coefficient (r) is calculated to be 0.524, indicating a moderately strong positive correlation between the variables. The associated p-value of .000, which is less than the conventional significance level of .05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant but moderate relationship that exist between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that students generally demonstrate a moderate level of oral communication ability in English, suggesting some room for improvement in their speaking skills. This aligns with recent studies emphasizing that communication proficiency is a key predictor of academic success, as students with stronger speaking abilities tend to engage more effectively in classroom discussions and collaborative learning (Komba & Kafanabo, 2012).

A notable strength among participants was their aspiration to improve English-speaking skills, reflecting a high level of motivation. Research suggests that goal setting in language learning plays a crucial role in enhancing oral communication proficiency, as students who establish clear learning objectives tend to be more engaged in language acquisition activities (MacIntyre et al., 2019). This finding highlights the importance of incorporating self-directed learning strategies into English instruction.

Conversely, students exhibited moderate self-confidence in their English-speaking abilities. Studies indicate that self-perceived competence significantly impacts students’ willingness to communicate, with those who lack confidence often refraining from active participation (Arta, 2019). Similar findings in Philippine educational settings suggest that language anxiety and fear of

making mistakes contribute to lower confidence levels, ultimately affecting students' engagement in oral communication (Soreño & Valle, 2024).

These findings suggest that fostering a communicative, student-centered learning environment can enhance both oral communication skills and engagement. Integrating goal-setting techniques, confidence-building strategies, and collaborative speaking tasks may help address students' challenges in oral communication.

The findings indicate that students demonstrate a high level of learning engagement, reflecting their emotional investment and motivation toward academic activities. This aligns with recent research emphasizing that motivated learners are more engaged, leading to better academic outcomes (Wulandari, 2023). Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (2000) suggests that when students feel autonomous, competent, and connected in their learning environment, their engagement increases, reinforcing the importance of creating student-centered and interactive classrooms (Reeve & Tseng, 2022).

A notable finding is that students express enjoyment in learning new things, indicating intrinsic motivation and curiosity as key drivers of engagement. Research suggests that positive learning experiences contribute to higher cognitive engagement, fostering academic perseverance and satisfaction (Wang & Eccles, 2013). These findings highlight the role of meaningful learning experiences in sustaining students' interest and commitment to education.

Conversely, students reported lower engagement in extracurricular activities, suggesting a potential gap between academic engagement and school involvement beyond the classroom. Research indicates that participation in extracurricular activities fosters social connections, leadership skills, and academic motivation (Ginosyan et al., 2019). The Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005) posits that learning engagement is shaped by multiple environmental influences, including school culture and extracurricular participation (Fredricks et al., 2023). This suggests that enhancing school-based extracurricular opportunities can further strengthen students' overall engagement. These findings highlight the need for holistic engagement strategies that integrate intrinsic motivation, interactive learning experiences, and extracurricular opportunities to foster a well-rounded educational experience.

The findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students, supporting the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that students with strong communication skills are more likely to engage actively in learning experiences, reinforcing the idea that language proficiency plays a critical role in academic engagement (Fredricks et al., 2014).

Recent studies indicate that students who feel confident in their oral communication abilities are more likely to participate in collaborative learning environments, enhancing both their own understanding and that of their peers (Yin, 2024). According to Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, language serves as a mediating tool for learning, meaning that effective oral communication fosters deeper cognitive engagement and social interaction in academic settings (Yin, 2024).

Moreover, Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (2000) highlights that communication competence supports intrinsic motivation, making students more likely to engage in discussions, group activities, and problem-solving tasks (Reeve & Tseng, 2019). When students feel

capable of articulating their thoughts, they develop higher self-efficacy, which encourages active classroom participation and academic persistence (Ginosyan et al., 2019).

These findings underscore the need for pedagogical strategies that enhance oral communication skills to improve student engagement. Integrating structured discussions, debate activities, and peer communication tasks into the curriculum can foster confidence and motivation, leading to higher engagement levels and improved learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The study found that Grade 12 HUMSS students have moderate to high levels of oral communication ability in English, with notable strengths in their desire to improve their speaking skills. However, self-confidence in speaking English remains an area for improvement, indicating the need for strategies to boost students' confidence and fluency in oral communication.

Similarly, students demonstrate a high level of learning engagement, especially in their enjoyment of learning new things. However, lower participation in extracurricular activities indicates a gap in holistic learning experiences, emphasizing the importance of encouraging co-curricular involvement to increase student engagement.

There was a significant positive correlation between oral communication ability and learning engagement, indicating that students with stronger communication skills are more likely to actively participate in learning.

Recommendations

To address the lower mean scores in both oral communication ability in English and learning engagement among Grade 12 HUMSS students, the researchers suggest focusing on supportive opportunities and structured encouragement. To address the identified areas for improvement, students are encouraged to actively participate in activities such as speech clubs, debate teams, and workshops to build self-confidence while regularly using language learning applications and engaging in group discussions to enhance their oral communication ability.

Also, teachers should focus on providing constructive feedback and incorporating interactive lessons like role-plays, group discussions, and presentations to foster student engagement and improve communication proficiency.

On one hand, the school administrators should provide students with accessible resources, such as workshops and practice sessions, to reinforce their confidence in speaking English by creating a comfortable environment for skill-building. On the other hand, for learning engagement, the school could introduce diverse extracurricular options aligned with students' interests and academic goals, such as debate clubs, arts, or community outreach, to provide meaningful opportunities for engagement.

Lastly, future researchers could investigate intervention programs or teaching methodologies that specifically address low self-confidence in oral communication and their impact on learning engagement.

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