

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD SPEAKING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSIDE THE CLASSROOM IN PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by:

Kyla Kathleen P. Abingona

Teacher I, Hermosa National High School

In the Philippine public school system under the Department of Education (DepEd), English serves as one of the official languages of instruction alongside Filipino. It is used across key learning areas such as English, Science, and Mathematics, making oral proficiency an essential skill for learners. However, despite early exposure to the English language, many Filipino students display varying attitudes toward speaking English inside the classroom. These attitudes significantly influence learners' participation, confidence, and academic performance.

Attitude in language learning refers to learners' beliefs, feelings, and predispositions toward using a language (Gardner, 1985). In the context of Philippine public schools, students' attitudes toward speaking English are shaped by linguistic diversity, classroom environment, teacher practices, and the sociocultural value of English in society.

Positive Attitudes Toward Speaking English in the Philippine Classroom

Many Filipino learners demonstrate positive attitudes toward speaking English, particularly when they recognize its importance for academic success, employment, and global communication. English is often associated with higher education and professional advancement in the Philippines, which motivates some students to actively participate in oral classroom activities.

Studies on language learning motivation emphasize that positive attitudes toward English enhance learners' willingness to communicate and improve speaking performance

(Dörnyei, 2005). In public school classrooms, students who are encouraged to speak English through group discussions, oral recitations, and performance tasks tend to gain confidence and show improved fluency. These learners view English not merely as a subject but as a functional tool for expressing ideas.

Negative Attitudes, Anxiety, and Use of Mother Tongue

Despite its importance, a significant number of students in Philippine public schools exhibit negative attitudes toward speaking English. Fear of making grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, and fear of being laughed at by classmates are common concerns. These challenges are more evident in large class sizes and multilingual classrooms, where students speak different mother tongues.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), foreign language anxiety can discourage learners from participating in oral activities. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis further explains that anxiety, low self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation can block language acquisition. In the Philippine context, students often prefer to use Filipino or their local language during discussions, especially when they lack confidence in English.

The implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program in the early grades also affects students' transition to English. While MTB-MLE strengthens foundational literacy, some learners struggle when English becomes the primary medium of instruction in higher grade levels, influencing their attitude toward speaking English.

Role of Teachers and Classroom Environment

Teachers in Philippine public schools play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward speaking English. A supportive and non-threatening classroom environment encourages learners to speak without fear of ridicule. Research suggests that teachers who provide

positive reinforcement, model correct language use, and treat mistakes as part of the learning process foster more positive attitudes toward speaking English (Dörnyei, 2001).

Communicative teaching strategies such as pair work, role-playing, group reporting, and guided oral presentations are effective in encouraging participation even among shy learners. In large DepEd classrooms, these strategies help create more opportunities for students to practice speaking English in a less intimidating setting. When students feel accepted and supported, their willingness to communicate in English increases (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

As a conclusion, in Philippine public school classrooms, students' attitudes toward speaking English are influenced by psychological factors, sociolinguistic realities, and instructional practices. While some learners exhibit positive attitudes driven by motivation and perceived benefits, others experience anxiety and reluctance due to fear of errors and peer judgment. Research underscores the importance of a supportive classroom environment and effective teaching strategies in developing positive attitudes toward speaking English. By fostering confidence, encouraging participation, and valuing learners' linguistic backgrounds, DepEd teachers can help students improve their oral communication skills and succeed academically.

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