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## **Oral Communication Skills in English among Grade 11 Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) Students**

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### **Abstract**

This study employed descriptive and inferential methods to determine, characterize and analyze the oral communication skills in English of Grade 11 HUMSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) students. The students' level of performance along the said skills is measured using two indicators, i.e. "listening skills" and "speaking skills." The students were profiled regarding their socio-demographics and learner-related characteristics to constitute an independent set of variables that were statistically correlated to their performance in oral communication skills. Data were retrieved using researcher-developed instruments that are theory-informed and subjected to content validation by field experts.

As to the students' performance in the listening skills test as a component- indicator of oral communication skills, the majority of them registered “good” performance level. As to their performance in the speaking skills test as the other component-indicator of oral communication skills, the majority of them registered within the bracket of “good” performance level.

On the statistical computations that determined whether or not the students’ socio-demographic variables are significantly different from their levels of performance along the two indicators of oral communication skills, the findings indicate that none of the variables differentiated the students' level of performance along listening skills. Although, "mother's educational attainment" was found to be a differentiating variable in the students' level of performance along speaking skills.

On the statistical computations that determined any significance of the relationship between the students’ academic and language-learning variables and their level of performance along the two indicators of oral communication skills, “academic performance in English subject” was found to be associated with the level of performance in listening skills. Likewise, "academic performance in English subject” and “exposure to mass media types” were found to be significantly related to speaking skills.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations were offered to improve instructional efficiency and strategies that can enhance students' performance in English oral communications skills, which involve the initiative and cooperation among the concerned English language teachers, the School management, the students, their parents and instructional material designers. Recommendations were also addressed to future researchers to continue their scholarly investigation of the phenomenon of oral communication skills and the pursuit to establish conditions related to such qualifications as a basis to improve pedagogy and in formulating intervention strategies.

**Keywords:** *oral communication, communication skills, HUMSS, English language*

## **Introduction**

The Department of Education in the Philippines ideates to establish a system of education that, indeed inculcates the youth with the skills they need to pursue their dreams (<https://www.coursehero.com/file/p6oge3h/Amen-Page-6-of-68-ADMISSION-AND-REGISTRATION-Students-admitted-to-LPU-have-to/>). One of its goals is to develop in learners the skills, competencies, work ethics, and values relevant to continuing further

education and/or joining the world of work. In whatever choices the students will have after taking Senior High School, the Department of Education intends to equip students with all the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences that they can use to make themselves more capable and competent in their chosen paths or careers.

Meanwhile, HUMSS (initials for "Humanities and Social Sciences") is a strand in Senior High School Curriculum (SHSC) meant for those who aim to take up journalism, communication arts, liberal arts, education, and other social sciences – related courses in college. This strand revolves around improving the students' written and oral communication and discourse skills. It is in this strand that these mentioned skills are honed in them to establish effective communication with people whom they will be working. As such, most of the subjects involved in this strand focus on communication, language, and speech. Students who are taking up HUMSS are, thereby, expected to be "great speakers," thus, their oral communication skills, especially in using the English language, is essential to be developed.

About communication skills that are central to the HUMSS strand, Evans (2015) stated that oral communication skills are meaningful to the development of literacy and essential for thinking and learning. It is the glue that puts all the components of a language together. Through talk, students do not only communicate information<sup>1</sup> but also explore and come to understand ideas and concepts, identify and solve problems, organize their experience and knowledge, and express and clarify their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Also, Rahman (2002 in Alam and Uddin, 2013), said that English language gives social prestige to one who can speak it, thus, empowering the elite and keeps the power within it. Undoubtedly, therefore, the ability to logically present one's ideas using English is integral to success in almost any area of life.

In a survey made by the National Association of Colleges and Employers in 2016, communication skills, both written and oral, ranked as the most important personal quality that employers seek in an employee. In today's global society, people often use English as an international language of communication. The ability to use English in the workplace has some benefits including helping one's company to succeed, building trust with colleagues and clients, building and improving international relationships, enhancing skill-set and commanding a higher salary, and enhancing international relations through cultural understanding.

The study of Morreale & Pearson (2008) provides a rationale for the claim that communication instruction is crucial to students' future personal and professional success. Their research proved the centrality of communication skills in developing the whole person – making him/her a responsible social and cultural participant in the world, successful regarding career and business, efficient organizational processes and organizational life.

Several previous studies have categorically shown that the Philippines is known to be an excellent English-speaking country. After all, English is treated as a second language in the country. Filipinos widely use English in their daily communication and transactions. In schools, from primary education up to college, the English language is being taught, and almost everywhere in the country, the English language can be heard. Almost all types of people regardless of race and educational attainment, know the language (Benasing, 2013). The company "Education First" (EF) recently published on their official website the [English Proficiency Index](#) (EPI) report as of 2017. Accordingly, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore all rank in the upper quartile of this year's index.

Moreover, Claro's (2012) article in PhilStar Global states that:

"If there's one trait Filipinos are proud of as a people, they can speak a foreign language. Speaking fluent English is our country's strategic edge that has attracted foreign investors to set up companies and outsource labor." (Claro, 2012)

Another report by Cabigon (2015) of the British Council-Philippines assumed that proficiency in the English language is already one of our country's strengths that have driven our economy to boost up and made us surpassed other neighboring countries. However, Cabigon opined that in a recent roundtable organized by British Council Philippines, key stakeholders from the government, academe, private, and nongovernment sectors acknowledged that even if the country were doing fine regarding English competency, concerns on how much of a competitive advantage it still is here were raised. Cabigon (2015) explained

that the stakeholders believed that the country needs to intensify its efforts in developing the teaching and learning of English in our country, developing it as a vital skill of the workforce because it is an action that can potentially reinforce the country's distinct advantage in this part of the world. He also added that according to Rosario Alonzo, the University of the Philippines College of Education, "Our future teachers should ensure that English is a means of communication, rather than a set of facts to be learned."

With all the aforementioned positive insights regarding Filipinos' proficiency in English during the previous years, it cannot be denied that there are still vast of challenges that the

current educational system is facing at the moment, especially when it comes to the speaking abilities in using the English language by the students in today's generation.

Rapoza (in Hernandez, 2015) in an article entitled "Countries with the Best Business English," published in the Forbes magazine, cited a Mckinsey & Company study showing that only 13 percent of graduates from emerging countries are suited for employment in global companies and that the primary reason is lack of English skills. Hernandez (2015) then signified to the report of "IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines (Ibpap)" that reveals a hiring hit rate of 8-10%, closely resembling the Mckinsey & Company study, mostly for the same reason (i.e., lack of proficiency in Business English). Furthermore, the Department of Science and Technology's (DOST) competency mapping of 20,000 new college graduates vis-à-vis 3,000 new hires using Ibpap's industry-grade Global Competency Assessment Tool concluded that the broadest competency gap between what the IT-business process management industry needs and what our graduates have are in English proficiency (29%). The necessary skills of the top 25% of students are only 9% higher than the average demand of the IT-BPM sector. Thus, employers still turn away many of our youth because their English skills are below par, despite the Philippines being a country where the English language is deeply entrenched in the local culture.

In a synthesis of the above, this researcher has also noted from her cumulative observations and informal surveys on the language learning capabilities of the Grade 11 students of Basista National High School, particularly the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in the Senior High School. As observed, the students seem to have poor performance in English, precisely highlighted by their difficulties in expressing themselves in front of a class or in different speaking activities, to think that they are expected to deal with communication-related tasks and performances in their future chosen career paths. These localized observations vividly concur with the reports and findings noted by the research from her extensive readings of pertinent literature and previous studies conducted. All the more, the researcher felt challenged and inspired to account for concrete evidence in the context of her institutional affiliation to formally substantiate her speculations and hypotheses. These have taken the rigorous effort to establish the data that characterizes the oral communication skills in English of the students and to identify probable factors or triggers or associated conditions that influence these skills. This valuable information can be utilized subsequently in the formulation of school-mediated intervention measures that will address the absolute need of the students to develop, master, and improve their communication skills. At the further end, the researcher hopes that this will adjacently contribute in realizing the vision of the different

schools in the Municipality of Basista, i.e., to produce promising and globally competitive future workers and professionals.

## **Literature Review**

### ***On the Phenomenon of Oral Communication***

Generally speaking, oral communication is the process of expressing information or ideas by word of mouth (<http://study.com/academy/lesson/oral-communication-definition-types-advantages.html>).\ It includes the abilities to speak and listen effectively for the purposes of informing, persuading, and relating (Morreale et al., 1998). Students engage in these abilities in different types of interactions, including public speaking (e.g., formal presentations), small groups, and one-on-one conversations.

As to the practical benefits of being equipped with oral communication skills,<sup>18</sup> proficient oral communication has been emphasized in several studies as necessary for academic and professional success (Rubin and Morreale, 1996).

According to Mead and Rubin (1985), there is a tendency to define oral communication narrowly, i.e., merely focusing on speaking and listening skills separately. Traditionally, people describe speaking skills in a context of public speaking. Recently, however, Brown (1981) said that definitions of speaking had been expanded. One trend has been to focus on communication activities that reflect a variety of settings: one-to-many, small group, one-to-one, and mass media. Another approach has been to focus on using communication to achieve specific purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to solve problems. A third trend has been to focus on essential competencies needed for everyday life -- for example, giving directions, asking for information, or providing necessary information in an emergency situation. Many of these broader views stress that oral communication is an interactive process in which an individual alternately takes the roles of speaker and listener, and which includes both verbal and nonverbal components.

### ***On the Components / Sub-Skills of Oral Communication: Listening and Speaking Skills***

From a linguistic point of view, the overall skills of oral communications can be dichotomized into its component-skills namely, listening skills and speaking skills. These two skills can stand independently in their respective significance as macro skills of English. However, they are viewed in this study as the indicators of oral communication skills. The two skills are discussed below their roles in oral communication.



**Listening Skills.** To listen, according to Nichols & Lewis ([https://www.academia.edu/603612/What\\_is\\_listening](https://www.academia.edu/603612/What_is_listening)), is to attach “meaning to the aural symbols perceived”. Steinberg (2007) also said that **listening** is more complicated than merely hearing. It is a process that consists of four stages: sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering, and responding. Similarly, Morreale et al. (1998) defined listening as the ability to receive, construct meaning from, and respond to spoken and non-verbal messages. Active listening involves literal and critical comprehension of the ideas and information being communicated orally.

Listening is a vital component of the oral communication or the interactive process in which the individual takes the roles of speaker and listener through a verbal and non-verbal component. It means that the ability of a person to communicate effectively depends on his listening skills. De Vera (2005) said that an active listener responds appropriately to what is said and fosters a productive exchange.

In an explanation by Rost (1994), he drew a particular list of components to master when dealing with listening skills. They are as follows: (a) discriminating between sounds; (b) recognizing words; (c) identifying stressed words and grouping of words; (d) identifying functions (such as apologizing) in conversations; (e) connecting linguistic cues to paralinguistic cues (intonation and stress) and to non-linguistic cues (gestures and relevant objects in the situation) in order to construct meaning; (f) using background knowledge and context to predict and then to confirm meaning; (g) recalling essential words, topics and ideas; (h) giving appropriate feedback to the speaker; and (i) reformulate what the speaker has said (<http://thesis.univ-biskra.dz/1696/11/chapterII.pdf>).

Furthermore, Stepanovienė (2012) on his book, “Barrier to Academic Listening: Research Perspectives”, stated that the most difficult obstacle to listening comprehension was the lack of knowledge of legal English vocabulary while the least difficult factor was sequencing of information in a legal text. The pointed out most difficult reason which is poor vocabulary is in relation with Kutlu, O. & A.E. Aslanoglu (2009)’s findings that “number of juvenile books at home”, “number of books at home”, “time spent reading books”, “time spent reading newspaper” and “time spent listening to radio” have significant effects on students’ success in their listening performance for it is expected that through exposure to the said media platforms, students can develop wider range of English vocabulary.

**Speaking Skills.** Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its forms and meanings are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the

participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Finally, speech has its skills, structures, and conventions different from a written language (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Carter & McCarthy, 1995; Cohen, 1996). A good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

Duzer (1997) mentioned that a speaker's skills and speech habits have an impact on the success of any exchange. Speakers must be able to anticipate and then produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations. They must also manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting (Burns & Joyce, 1997). It is necessary that a learner must know the usual pattern used in interaction and access his knowledge as the exchange progresses. He must also choose the correct vocabulary, rephrase or emphasize words for clarification, and use appropriate facial expressions. Other skills and knowledge that instruction might address include the following: producing the sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, and intonations of the language; using grammar structures accurately; assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge or shared points of reference, status and power relations of participants, interest levels, or differences in perspectives; selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs; applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listener comprehension; using gestures or body language; and paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener comprehension and involvement (Brown, 1994) (<http://area.dge.mec.pt/gramatica/whatspeaking.is.htm>).

### ***On the Factors and Variables Associated to Oral Communication Performance***

Many of the previous studies that dealt with oral communication offered insights as to the different factors or variables that have been associated with the performance of ESL learners regarding oral communication. Some of these variables are discussed as follows.

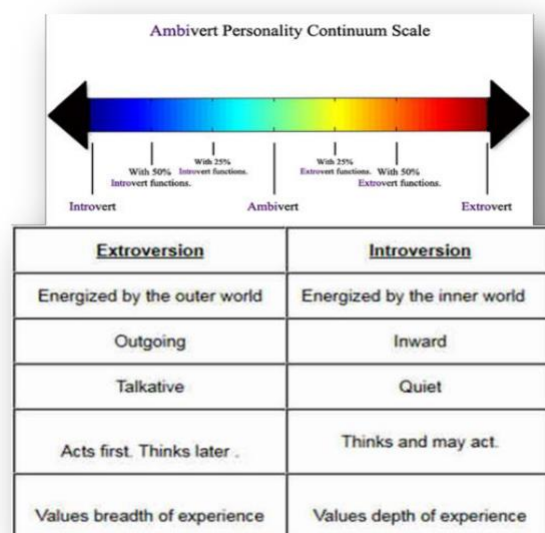
#### **Personality Types (Extroversion - Introversion) and Oral Communication Skills.**

Sheir et al., in their study, affirmed the growing emphasis on the learner and the renewed interest in the role of personality traits in the acquisition of foreign language. Accordingly,

several types of research found a relationship between personality traits and foreign language proficiency. Zahibi (2011) and Fazeli (2011) proved a significant relationship between personality traits and FL proficiency as well as achievement scores. Likewise, according to Ahmadian and Yadgari (2011), the personality trait: extroversion-introversion is one of the significant factors which has been claimed to influence the learners' speaking performance. Meanwhile, Weber (2015) stated that listening skills may be different between introverts and extroverts but not with regard to their listening performance level and in the type of listening skills they activate.

Boroujeni et al. (2015) cited that extraversion and introversion dichotomy deals with the way people prefer to attain energy and focus their attention. Extroverts prefer to get energy from outside sources or the outer world, but introverts prefer solitary activities and the inner world of ideas as the source of their energy (Eysenck & Chan, 1982). It is the first dimension of Jung's system identified a person's general orientation toward life (Jensen and Ditiberio, 1984). Extroverts mainly focus their energy outward and tend to interact with people and things. Outer experience (i.e., talking and acting) is so profoundly crucial for them that they often begin performing tasks with little planning, then rely on trial and error to complete the task. Since they spend more time dealing with outer experience rather than inner experience (i.e., reflecting and observing), they think most clearly and develop more ideas in action or conversation. On the contrary, introverts mostly focus their energy inward; they tend to consider and contemplate.

Figure 1 demonstrates the continuum between introversion and extroversion, as well as the different traits of these personality types.



**Figure 1. The Introvert-Extrovert Continuum and Traits**

**Communication Apprehension and Oral Communication Skills.** Regardless of the context, practical instruction in oral communication needs to address not only what students can do, but also their motivation for communicating and what they know about effective communication. **Motivation** or the desire to speak is influenced by both apprehension and willingness to initiate a communication (Morreale, 2007). Apprehension and willingness may vary with the type of communication involved; some people may be reluctant to engage in public speaking but feel entirely comfortable in small groups.

According to McCroskey (2001), communication apprehension is the broad term that refers to an individual's "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons". As McCroskey further describes this phenomenon:

"Communication apprehension [is] the fear or anxiety people experience at the thought of being evaluated by others and some anxiety is a normal part of the communication process. The psychological threat individuals perceive in the communication situation prompts physiological changes designed to help the body respond and these physical reactions to stress create the uncomfortable feelings of unease called speech anxiety and may include sweaty palms, shaking, butterflies in the stomach, and dry mouth. A great deal of conventional advice for managing stage fright is misleading, including suggestions that speech anxiety is neurotic, that telling a joke is a good opening, that imagining the audience naked is helpful, that any mistake is fatal to an effective speech, that memorizing a script is useful, that audiences are out to get you, and that your audience sees how nervous you really are."  
(McCroskey, 2001)

For speaking as one of the oral communication skills, a study of Juhana (2012) found out psychological factors that hinder students from speaking and the causes of the factors as well as the possible solutions to overcome the factors. It was revealed that psychological factors such as fear of making mistake, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence and lack of motivation hinder students from speaking in English class. Those factors, like fear of making mistakes, were commonly caused by their fear of being laughed at by their friends. The possible solution to overcome those psychological factors, most students believed that motivating them to be

more confident to speak English is worth considering. This finding suggests that the teachers should be more aware of their students' hindrance to speak in English class (<http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/2887>).

**Sex and Oral Communication Skills.** The relationship between sex and oral communication skills have been discussed somewhat indirectly in literature and studies that dealt with this theme. One such indirect treatment of the theme is the sex-aggregated analysis of communication apprehension as accounted for by male and female students. The primary cause of apprehension or anxiety in the community is because of a lack of confidence that one has adequate skills to communicate. As such, students who are not confident in their communication skills know it as a result of self-assessment and could be a reliable reference on the actual status of their oral communication skills.

Based on the above discussion, specific studies have, indeed, revealed that male and female students significantly differ as to how they report their level of communication apprehension. This claim implies that male and female students may, in fact, significantly differ too in their communication skills (Rafeka et al., 2014). Also, some researchers have looked into the correlation between gender and second and foreign language anxiety. McLean & Anderson (2009) also indicate that female have greater fear and have high possibility to develop anxiety as compared to men. However, findings on the relationship between learner's difference in gender with their performance, anxiety level and understandings in learning L2 and FL remain inconclusive and debatable. According to Rosenfeld & Berko (1990), different gender does not affect the communication apprehension as they claimed that 'gender is not significant in communication anxiety.' Although males tend to be shyer while females tend to have more public speaking anxiety, there seem to be a few consistent differences between the genders. However, a study by Wicks-Nelson & Israel (2006) found that naturally, female feel more anxious than male. It is due to many factors such as confidence, proficiency, security, and superiority. Under certain circumstances, females tend to feel easily vulnerable and therefore lead to the feeling of anxious and worried while male, on the other hand, does obtain more self-control and ability to detach themselves from unpleasant feelings. On a similar vein, from a study conducted by Machida (2001), she examined FL Japanese language class anxiety based on gender differences, and the findings reflected that female learners are more anxious than the male counterparts.

Additionally, a study conducted by Mejias et al. (1991) on the oral communication apprehension among Mexican American students in Texas found that Mexican American females in their study consistently produced higher communication score than the Mexican

American males. On the contrary, Kitano (2001), in his research in the context of English as a foreign language found that in comparison to female students, male students tend to be more anxious while learning a second language. The data shows that male students are found to be more apprehensive in speaking as they perceive their speech to be less competent than that of the females.

## **Methodology**

This study employed the descriptive and inferential methods of research to characterize the students' performance in oral communication using the English language, as well as to analyze what learner-innate variables possibly differentiate the students' performance or what conditions relate to their performance.

The descriptive survey looks with full accuracy at the phenomena of the moment and precisely describes what is being seen, observed, or perceived (Cole, 2018). The conventional instrument used in recording data from observations or perceptions is the questionnaire, although this study employed a specialized content-validated test to gauge the students' level of performance in oral communication, as indicated by their listening skills and speaking skills.

Inferential statistics are used to examine the relationships between variables within a sample, and then make generalizations or predictions about how those variables will relate within a larger population (Cole, 2018).

## ***Respondents of the Study***

The dataset in this study is sourced from the self-reports and the ratings obtained by a total of forty (40) student respondents. Due to the difficulty of documenting and evaluating speech samples from several possible respondents of the study, the researcher limited the number of her respondents to forty. All respondents are enrolled as Grade 11 under the HUMSS strand in the school year 2017-2018 at the time the study was conducted. The research population draws from the combined number of Grade 11 students from two Basic Education Institutions (BEIs) located in the Municipality of Basista, Pangasinan (research locale). To enable fair representation, the two BEIs included one public institution, i.e., Basista National High School, and one private institution, i.e., Mary Help of Christians Catholic School.

The raw combined population of Grade 11 HUMSS students in the schools above total to 156. Stratified random sampling was further applied to identify the sampling population, which was eventually reduced to 40. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the research population and the distribution of the student respondents into the two schools where they were extracted.

The table shows that students were taken from all the three sections of Grade 11 HUMSS students in Basista National High School. The private school has only one part. Majority of the respondents were drawn from Basista National High School (31), overshadowing the number of students taken from the Mary Help of Christians Catholic School

(9). The imbalance is naturally explained by the fact that the raw population in the public school is much larger than in the private school.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Performance along Listening Skills***

The students' performance in listening skills is based on the ratings they obtained in the performance test administered to them by the researcher. The students were tested along different micro skills subsumed under the macro skill, i.e., "listening". Data treatment no longer includes the description and presentation of the ratings of each student's performance in each micro skill. The latter scores were immediately synthesized to generate their overall performance rating along listening skills.

The findings of this study seem to oppose the claims of Stepanoviene (2012) as stated in her study, "Barriers to Academic Listening: Research Perspectives". He claims that among the macros skills in English, learners accounted for the lest level of performance regarding listening skills (Stepanoviene, 2012). He also quoted parallel findings in other studies (e.g., Kavaliauskiene, 2008; Alam, 2009; Abedin, 2010,; and Velička, 2007 in Stepanoviene, 2012). Contrary to the claims and findings in these studies, the present study found that the students generally performed well along listening skills as previously qualified. However, the aforecited studies may have employed a more rigorous, highly accurate, or more challenging instrument to test the accounts of their respondents along listening skills.

Performance tests along listening skills usually integrate a comprehensive array of sub-skills (i.e., micro skills in listening). Some of the sub-skills presuppose the ability of a learner to struggle against listening challenges associated with: (a) rate of delivery; (b) phonological reduction; (c) vocabulary; (d) syntactic reduction; (e) cross-cultural elements; (f) sequencing of information; (g) breaking down speech into words or group of words; (h) lack of knowledge of English idioms; (i) lack of redundancy; and (j) rhythm (Stepanoviene, 2012). The performance test employed in this study was delimited to consider only a few of these criteria.

### ***Performance along Speaking Skills***

The students' performance in speaking skills is based on the ratings they obtained in a separate performance test administered to them by the researcher. The students were tested along different micro skills subsumed under the macro skill, i.e., "speaking". Data treatment no longer includes the description and presentation of the ratings of each student's performance in each micro skill. The latter scores were immediately synthesized to generate their overall performance rating along listening skills.

Indeed, a "good level of performance" under listening skills is equal in rank with "good level of performance" when it comes to speaking skills. Likewise, the previously quoted findings of Tuan & Mai (2015) categorically confirmed that poor listening ability is indeed one of the prominent factors to students' poor speaking performance. This current study, however, makes no further attempt to correlate the results of the students' performance in listening and speaking skills. However, on a prima facie glance over the data, it cannot be denied that the respective mean scores obtained by the students in the listening test and speaking test have equivalent rank in the qualitative description of the score range. As previously mentioned, a "good performance level" in listening skills is equal in rank with a "good performance level" in speaking skills. Thereby, this study's findings provide further support for the research claim of Tuan & Mai. As the latter researchers have pointed out that having poor listening ability can significantly result to having poor speaking performance, then this causal relationship could explain why this current study's respondents generally obtained a performance level in speaking skills that are equal to their performance level in listening skills.

## ***SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 11 HUMMS STUDENTS ACROSS THEIR SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE***

### ***Listening Skills and Socio-demographic Variables***

Findings show that there is no significant difference in the students' performance along listening skills despite variations in their "sex, age, parents' educational attainment, range of family income, and personality type". The quantities reflected in the table shows that the variables did not pass within the threshold of the established level of significance at 0.05. These results indicate that the students' level of performance along listening skills is intact regardless of their "sex, age, parents' educational attainment, range of family income, and personality type".



The above findings concur with those in the study of Gruber & Gaebelin (1979) which also found no difference in the listening skills between men and women. However, the researchers employed graduate and college students as respondents. The findings of this study extend the exploration and applicability of Gruber & Gaebelin's conclusions even to the case of younger learners, i.e., Grade 11 students. Moreover, the study of Gruber & Gaebelin tested the respondents' listening skills by their ability to "accurately recall information listened to". Both male and female respondents fared equally in such ability. However, the researchers' investigation further explored on the judgment rendered by male and female respondents as to the quality of information listened to. While it may have been established that male and female students listened in relatively equal level, male students were more appreciative of information listened from women but not the other way around. The design of this study does not enable such investigation since the respondents were not rated of their listening performance relative to the sex of who they listen to.

On the contrary, the findings in the study of Zenger (2015) diverge from this study's findings. The research is entitled "Age, Gender, and Ability to Listen". Zenger's respondents for the study involved a magnitude of almost five thousand respondents based in different countries across Asia, Canada, Europe, South America, and the United States. The study boasted strongly conclusive findings proving that females are significantly better listeners than males, and females also demonstrate a substantially stronger preference for listening than males. Likewise, Zenger's study also showed that age is related considerably to listening skills which run counter to the findings of this study. Zenger gives further qualification to his conclusion that differences in listening skills across different age also depend on sex. In the case of men, their listening skills progress along with aging, but in the case of women, their listening skills are nearly the same across different age.

With regard, the finding that personality type (extrovert-introvert) is not significantly related to listening skills, Weber (2015) states that listening skills may vary between introverts and extroverts but not regarding listening performance level but in the type of listening skills they activate or operate. However, Weber also welcomed the idea that introverts tend to have highly developed language receptive skills, like listening and reading, compared to extroverts. On the contrary, the usable data in this study that was subjected to statistical computation has apparent limitations since no one among the respondents was found to have an introvert personality. Thus, there is no way for this study to analyze characteristics in the listening skills of introvert learners.

### *Speaking skills and Socio- demographic Variables*

Data reveals that significant difference on the students' speaking skills existed on their mothers' highest educational attainment as shown by the obtained significance which is below the prescribed value (.05), and partial eta squared of 27.6 percent. The findings were confirmed by the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis which exceeded more than 70 percent (72.4 percent).

On the other hand, the variables "sex, age, father's educational attainment, range of family income, and personality type" did not pass within the threshold of the established level of significance at 0.05. It means that, in the case of these other variables, the students' level of performance along speaking skills is intact regardless of whatever variations they may have along these variables.

On the extent of the researcher's readings of studies and literature, there is so far no accessible research-generated data linking parental education to students' speaking skills. Thus, the significant finding of this study is a contribution to academic literature, which may be subject to further confirmation or verification in future research.

Based on the literature accessed by the researcher, the most that were found are studies that relate parental education to students' listening skills but not to speaking skills. For instance, the study of Kutlu & Aslanoglu (2009) concluded that the father's educational attainment, and not that of the mother, signifies the students' listening comprehension skills. Their study entitled, "Factors Affecting the Listening Skill" employed complex statistical tools and research design which do not merely involve the inferential method. The study aimed to establish the factors to listening skill and not just variables associated with it. Accordingly, Kutlu & Aslanoglu posited that students' performance along listening comprehension skills decreases along with higher educational attainment of their fathers.

With the research positing this as one of the factors of listening skill, it means that students who have fathers with low educational attainment are likely to condition them to have higher performance along listening comprehension. However, aside from the mere employment of statistical computations, Kutlu & Aslanoglu do not provide any further discussion to explain the conceptual link between the students' listening comprehension skills and their father's educational attainment. In as far as this study's findings are concerned; the students' performance along speaking skills can be significantly differentiated given the different status of the educational attainment of their mothers. Reviewing the reference data used in the statistical computation, it appears that the Grade 11 students who have mothers with higher educational attainment also

exhibited higher levels of performance along speaking skills. Conversely, students who exhibited lower levels of performance along speaking skills were those whose mothers have relatively lower educational attainment. Since available literature does not explain the conceptual link between maternal educational attainment and students' speaking skills, this research posits that the close association between the variables may be explainable on the basis that students whose mothers have attained higher levels of education are likely to have more significant and more communication opportunities using English.

This, however, goes with the assumption that their mothers communicate with them in English, which renders the opportunity for the students to talk back in English as well. If this assumption is at all credible, then it means that the mothers are instrumental in exposing the students (their children) to better communication opportunities. Such communication opportunities trigger students to engage in productive language skills, such as speaking.

Another assumption underlying the researcher explains that the students must have higher frequencies of communication with their mothers than their fathers because it is their mothers who provide the more significant contribution to communication opportunities which the students seem to access more and thus trigger their ability to speak under such situations.

## ***SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE OF GRADE 11 HUMMS STUDENTS AND THEIR ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE-LEARNING PROFILE***

### ***Listening Skills and Academic and Language-learning Variables***

Findings show that there is only one among the variables found to be significantly related to listening skills, i.e., the students' "academic performance in English subject". The variables "exposure to mass media types; communication apprehension; access to communication opportunities; and ESL learning attitude" did not pass the threshold of the established level of significance at 0.05. It means that, in the case of these other variables, they do not significantly coincide with the students' level of performance along listening skills.

The above-stated findings can be signified by the conclusions of Juha (1986) that investigated the "Academic Demands Related to Listening Skills". Powers' research surveyed teachers as to their perception of the importance and impact of listening skills to the academic success and performance of students. The study hypothesized on the probable causal relationship between listening skills and academic performance, wherein the former is posited as the cause and the latter as the effect. From Powers' findings, he concluded that:

"[...] Faculty perceived some listening skills as more important than others for academic success. These included nine skills in particular that were related primarily to various aspects of lecture content (e.g., identifying major ideas and relationships among them). As might be expected, faculty perceived that non-native students experience more difficulty than native students with all listening activities, and that non-native students have disproportionately greater difficulty with some activities, such as following lectures given at different speeds and comprehending or deducing the meaning of important vocabulary." (Powers, 1986)

Considering the above research conclusion by Powers, this study's findings, indeed, empirically substantiate and to complement his findings. Teachers' perception of the causal relationship of listening skills to academic performance can only be weighed as a theoretical construct until proven empirical using evidence showing that students with high academic performance are the ones who have good listening skills. Concerning that, this study gives evidence to such an account, although this study's association between listening skills and academic performance was merely analyzed using inferential (specifically correlational) statistics, and thus cannot account for a certain theory of a causal relationship between the variables. The extent of this study's findings only accounts that the two variables are associated. If this may cue on a causal relationship, it remains to be further explored which variable serves as cause to the other. The answer to this is beyond what this study can prove. It is also possible that the two variables are mutually supportive or reinforcing each other, and in such case, there is no causal phenomenon to speak of.

However, given that Powers' research-based theory is reliable, then this study and that of Powers can complement to reinforce the theory that listening skills indeed has a causal impact on students' academic performance. The statistical results in Table 11 indicate that significance in relationship was not only established but that the relationship between listening skills and academic performance is "moderately strong". On a careful review of the reference data for the statistical computation, it is clear that the students with relatively higher levels of academic performance are also those students with higher levels of performance along listening skills.

### ***Speaking Skills and Academic and Language-learning Variables***

Similar to the statistical treatment in the preceding discussion, Spearman's Rho Correlation was also used to statistically correlate the students' speaking skills and their profile along academic and language-learning variables. The results of the statistical computation are reflected in Table 13.

Findings show that only two (2) of the variables, i.e., "academic performance in English subject" and "Exposure to mass media types" were found to be significantly related to speaking skills. The variables "communication apprehension; access to communication opportunities; and ESL learning attitude" did not pass the threshold of the established level of significance at 0.05. It means that, in the case of these other variables, they do not significantly coincide with the students' level of performance along speaking skills.

The above-stated findings reinforce the prior discussed finding that academic performance is related to listening skills. This section proves that it is also related to speaking skills. The reference data subjected to statistical computation, indeed, show that the students with relatively high levels of academic performance are the same students with higher levels of performance along speaking skills. These findings again corroborate with the research conclusions of Powers (1986) discussed in the preceding section. Underlying Power's hypothesis is that specific macro skills in English have a causal impact on students' academic performance, wherein his study focused on the macro skill of listening. However, since listening skills are complementary to speaking skills (Alonso, 2012), then Powers' hypothesis can be magnified to cover the significance of speaking skills, as well, its causal impact to students' academic skills.

With regard the finding that "exposure to mass media types is significantly related to speaking skills", this concurs with an almost similar finding in the study of Albayrak & Yanar (2014) entitled "Effects of Mass Media Tools on Speaking Skills and Teaching maritime English". The researchers also found that students' access to mass media rendered positive impacts on their speaking skills in English. However, the research gave some qualifications to their findings that it is specifically the "authentic mass media" which proved to be more helpful in the students' speaking skills. They identified authentic mass media materials as "television, radio, internet, social networking platforms, etc." (Albayrak & Yanar, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the merits of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Grade 11 HUMMS students are slightly more female than male populated. Their ages differ from 15 to 20 years old. Their parents are differentiated in educational attainment, ranging from College graduate (maximum) to Elementary School graduate (minimum). They belong to families with differentiated monthly incomes described "Very Low", "Average", and "Very High". Their personality types range from "High Extroversion", "Moderate Extroversion" and "Midway between the Introversion-Extroversion Continuum". They are exposed to different media types and in a different duration of exposure, among which include "Viewing Media", "Reading Media" and "Listening Media". Their experience of "communication apprehension" range from "High" to "Low" levels. Finally, their academic performance in English range from "Outstanding" (maximum) to "Fairly Satisfactory" (minimum).

2. Their listening and speaking skills indicate grade 11 students' oral communication performance. Their typical level of performance in listening skills is "good", while their typical performance along speaking skills is also "good".

3. Students' sex, age, parents' educational attainment, range of family income, and personality type" do not differentiate their level of performance along listening skills. However, their "mother's educational attainment" was found to be a differentiating variable in the students' level of performance along speaking skills.

4. Students' "academic performance in English subject" is significantly associated to their listening skills, while "academic performance in English subject" and "exposure to mass media types" are significantly associated to their speaking skills.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. On account of the students' profile which differentiated their levels of exposure in different types of media, it is highly recommended for teachers to design learning activities that will induce students' balanced exposure to "viewing media, listening media, and reading media". Moreover, the high level of communication apprehension of several students should be a catalyst for the school to organize learning activities and venues that reduce learning anxiety and which will promote greater communication opportunities among students.

2. On account of the students' relatively average levels of performance along listening and speaking skills, it cues to the school management that there is much room for the students to improve and advance towards higher levels. This vision should inspire teachers and the school management to pave for projects that aim to improve students' oral communication skills, being an essential set of skills indicated by listening and speaking skills.

3. On account of the finding that almost all the profile variables were not found to differentiate students' performance along listening and speaking skills, it is highly recommended for future research to be resourceful in hypothesizing an alternative set of variables aside from the ones used in this study that have the power to differentiate students' speaking and listening skills. This level of investigation shall continue in line with the pursuit to understand more the nature of speaking and listening skills to inspire more effective intervention strategies that can help modify students' skills towards advancement.

4. On account of the finding that "academic performance in English" and "exposure to mass media types" significantly relate to listening and speaking skills, thereby, it is recommended that greater instructional efforts be paved to improve students' performance in English subjects prior to their entry into Grade 11 because the skills learned in these subjects seem to serve well as preparation or a training ground for their enhancement of oral communication skills by the time they step into Grade 11. Likewise, the school must pave ways and means to improve students' exposure to as many varied types of mass media, since such disclosure is proven to affect the development of their oral communication skills in English.

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