

Communication Apprehension Continuum in The New Normal: A Grounded Theory

Liezel Algeline Carabeo¹, Juana Juanillas¹

¹Laguna State Polytechnic University Los Banos Campus, Philippines

Abstract

The study mainly focused on the experiences of the learners of Calamba Elementary School in Calamba City regarding communication apprehension. It utilized qualitative research with grounded theory as an approach. Through an in-depth individual interview, the learners' personal reflections of experience were recorded and analyzed to distinguish how they understand the effects of communication apprehension, as well as their coping mechanism to overcome it. Participants of this study were the 25 grade six learners from Calamba Elementary School who were chosen purposefully. In this study, the experiences of purposefully chosen participants were analyzed. The researcher used theoretical sampling and a two-cycle coding process to extract the themes and generate the theory. Results of the study revealed that the reasons for their communication apprehensions are the fear to be laughed at and afraid of bullying. It was found that some of the learners are nervous and shy, and they are afraid of their teachers which is why they seldom share their ideas, especially in front of the class. Meanwhile, CA affects the learners emotionally and socially. They experience emotional disturbance and social disparagement. The majority of the learners build a friendship to overcome communication apprehension. Also, it shows despite the challenges elementary learners are experiencing in communicating with others, they are not considering communication apprehension on thinking of leaving the school. Moreover, the teachers are also making ways to help learners who are afraid to share and express their ideas in front of the class. They are offering psychological assistance for the learners.

Keywords: *communication apprehension; intervention model; grounded theory*



This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-NC license.

INTRODUCTION

“Only through communication can human life hold meaning.”

Paulo Freire

Communication is indeed one of the most valuable tools that a person can use to express his/her feelings and ideas. Being able to communicate is essential, especially for children. Children were given chances to grow and be developed as functional literate citizens of the community through good communication. The above-presented quotation is a clear manifestation of the indispensability of communication. Since the world is experiencing this global pandemic, it is a great challenge for everyone to build good communication, especially the children who are directly affected by this situation.

In the Philippines, several policies implemented to ensure that learners will develop their communication skills while in school. Through DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2006, the department

Corresponding author

Liezel Algeline T. Carabeo, liezelangelina.carabeo@deped.gov.ph; Juana L. Juanillas, nitajuanillas@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijtaese.v4i1.612>

Research Synergy Foundation

implemented rules and regulations that will serve as a guide to establishing a policy that will intensify the utilization of the English Language in the teaching and learning process. Implementing this is a clear manifestation that the government values the importance of the English Language in the Philippines. Also, even before this global pandemic, most learners were already afraid to speak using the English language. According to Wa-Mbaleka (2014) and Berowa (2018), even though it has been implemented as a lingua franca in the Philippines, most Filipino learners struggle to learn it. The present situation may worsen this case not only for secondary learners but also for elementary pupils. Their communication skills are just in the process of full development, but it was hampered already by the situation. Communication skills are not innate. Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey (2013) stated that everyone could learn communication; even though they gained good communication skills, it is still dependent on the teachers who are supposed to teach it and the learners. There are many ways to be a good communicator. It can be through cautious teaching, individual reflection, knowledge, and training.

This problem is a long-standing challenge not only for the teachers but for the entire community. Elementary teachers are problematic in developing learners' communication skills and encouraging them to communicate, facing the reality that most public elementary schools offer a modular approach. Communication apprehension is one of the known challenges in this approach.

Communication apprehension refers to the feeling of hesitation of an individual to communicate or construct what he/she must express. According to Rimkeeratikul (2017), communication apprehension (CA) is one reason that hinders communication that can negatively affect a person's life. A person's capability in conversing with others, studying, work execution, and advancements are significantly disturbed. Also, it is a contributory factor to an absence of self-confidence and a decrease in self-esteem. Notably, communication apprehension comes with it a risk to leadership ability. In the study conducted by Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2013), students who are scared to speak demonstrated low leadership initiatives and are less adaptable. They emphasized that communication apprehension affects the understanding and achievement of learners in their studies and career settings.

Despite the challenges brought by the new normal in education, teachers are doing their best to elevate the quality of learning that the learners may gain in the present situation. Elementary teachers are still pursuing to level up the communication skills of the learners by any means. It has been the inspiration and starting point for the researcher to conduct this research. The present study provided an ideal opportunity to explore how elementary pupils developed communication apprehension.

This research attempts to address such problems by knowing their experiences and how they deal with them. It provided an opportunity to explore a new and relatively unexplored area regarding communication apprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication Apprehension among Learners Students

Communication apprehension is one of the problems encountered by most students. This feeling hinders an individual from expressing his/her ideas which usually led to ineffective communication skills. In the study conducted by Amiri and Puteh (2018) regarding communication apprehension, they found out that even doctoral learners experience communication apprehension. Their study qualitatively explored the case of oral communication apprehension (OCA). It also presented factors that affect students' OCA. These are language concerns, inadequacy in an understanding of research, and pessimistic views toward the presentation panel. The students were highly apprehensive in terms of academic presentation. The identified factors have worsened their level of OCA.

The results of their study illustrated that students also want to share their struggles and communication apprehension with their panelists. However, they added that it depends on the

setting. They want to do it when there is a confidential environment. Their study suggests that universities must need to organize a program regarding students' examinations. This action is necessary to secure the quality of the evaluation.

Similarly, the study of Meluch, Feehan, and Starcher (2019) delved deeper into the way of helping learners to overcome communication apprehension. They suggested that instructors must share their experience regarding CA as it helps them become at ease knowing that their professor also experienced it before. Students also stated that this enables them to promote public speaking skills. Their conclusion is like the previous investigation stating that students observe revelations related to class content as helpful (Kaufmann and Frisby, 2017).

Also, in the qualitative study of Munz and Colvins (2018), they presented another factor that contributes to communication apprehension among students. The data of their research are not only based on the experiences of the students. It is also based on their writing, researching, and augmentation skills. Results of their research study unveiled that audience analysis skills of learners also fueled communication apprehension. Students were afraid that the speaker is not only those who know the topic of their speech but at the same time audience too. They are overly concerned about doing the task correctly since they have an idea that their audience is aware of their concept.

Causes and Effects of Communication Apprehension

In the study of Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2013), they discovered that with no suitable coaching and instruction, communication apprehension could expand if learners have undesirable encounters with these projects. For example, if a learner does not know how to conquer communication apprehension and converse effectively, he may do a very poor job on his presentation and merely strengthen his uneasiness of communication. Similarly, a learner with greater communication apprehension appointed to a group project may not partake fully in the project and emphasize the practice of not providing his insights in a team setting. There are no effortless resolutions to these challenges, and responses to mediations are likely to depend on the learner's level of communication apprehension. Nevertheless, the documents regarding the negative effects of communication apprehension should intensify the focus on learning substitutes and remedies.

One good example is student-initiated questions that are focused on the enhanced fascination and commitment to increasing learners' motivation and understanding. According to Pedrosa-de-Jesus & Watts (2012), there is no need to involve the learners and increase their awareness. This will fill the gap between what they know already and what they will learn inside the classroom. Learners' asking questions is an indication of their active engagement in the activities that will enable them to gain new knowledge. They were able to perceive that allowing the learners to ask question reinforce creativity, and mutual comprehension. It also increased the trust between teachers and students, and student agency in their own learning processes.

Similarly, according to McCroskey (2012), learners' attitude toward communication is also affected by their personal outlooks regarding communication. According to him, there are several studies stating that there are varying degrees of why people communicate. It was also presented that there are also people who make way to avoid communication scenes. To do this, they are using a variety of effective, cognitive, and behavioral constructs. There are also research studies that talk about communication apprehension, eagerness to communicate, shyness, and susceptibility toward verbal behavior. In addition, learners' behavior towards communication along with their willingness to converse and share their ideas are influenced by their skills and competencies in communication.

Blume, Baldwin, and Ryan (2013) stated that students who are afraid to communicate are those who cannot handle leadership initiatives. They are also those learners who are less adaptable in all leadership undertakings. They emphasize that important traits in a variety of high-paying

professions are those who have good communication skills. They concluded that learners' avoidance of communication is due to fear and anxiety. They stated that this can affect their learning and academic achievements. It may also affect their future professional careers. According to them, there is a need to know how to lessen communication apprehension. It may be done by increasing their motivation, interest, involvement, and performance. It can also improve their learning performances.

Likewise, Breines and Chen stated that when learners experience failure, self-compassion aids facilitate an adaptive action toward this. In an experimental study they conducted, they found that learners who were able to reflect on their mistakes in communication developed self-compassion and they aim to improve more themselves. It is noted that developing self-compassion is significantly related to restudying a lesson after failing a specific examination. Self-compassion may reinforce resiliency and it can be a method to improve communication. The authors summarized an accurate knowledge of when and where one can improve, without either overly critiquing oneself or overly improving oneself to preserve an optimistic self-image.

RESEARCH METHOD

The constructivist grounded theory design was used to develop the research questions, and it was used to determine the emerging theory of the present study. The step-by-step process of gathering and coding the raw qualitative data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) together with observation was done to eventually lead to a theory that will explain the concept of communication apprehension among elementary learners. The concepts that were used to determine the emerging theory were gleaned from the subcategories and categories that appeared after the triangulation of the data. Data triangulation was conducted to gain a complete picture of learners' experiences related to communication apprehension and teachers' strategies to handle this kind of learner.

On the other hand, the type of sampling that was used to gain participants is purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves the selection of participants since their input would be of particular interest to the developing theory either through contrast or confirmation of that theory. The researcher ensured that the participants who were chosen for this study shared the same qualities and experiences. The researcher made sure that each of them equally has the possibility of adding data that will saturate not only the emergent categories but also contribute to determining the emerging theory as well.

In addition, the participants of the study were those with communication apprehension and were identified by their class advisers. This was verified by the researcher by asking their previous adviser prior to the current learning modality. To get meaningful data from the participants, the researcher was assured that they are willing to be part of the activity.

The grounded theory tradition typically includes detailed interviews with individuals or groups who are willing to share the conscious aspects of their experiences with the researcher. The primary data used in this study is semi-structured interview guide questions. The interview range only from 15 to 90 minutes. The interview guide questions were used to direct the flow of discussions with the participants. The researcher prepared seven questions for the participants. The questions were crafted by the researcher. The validators are all doctorate degree holders and were inclined in doing qualitative research.

Furthermore, the researcher chose to collect data through interviews with learners and teachers to provide immediate feedback on learner observations with follow-up questions and to maintain control of the scenario if participants became aloof and overly sensitive to word choices. It was also used to elicit narratives and create memos and field notes based on actual observations of participants' hidden perceptions; and to encourage richer disclosure, even to the point of encouraging respondents to assist in the making of meaning.

The data collection strategy for this research investigation consisted of in-depth interviews with 25 elementary learners of Calamba Elementary School. The learners who were part of the said

interview are those who experienced communication apprehension based on the set criteria of the researcher. The in-depth interview strategy embodies the research genre of personal experiences and trusting a single main method for obtaining meaningful data.

Moreover, the main method in this study is reading and re-reading verbatim transcriptions, field notes, and memoranda. It included categories and subcategories for data to be organized into. The first procedure is known as open coding of data. The first step in breaking down the data acquired during a grounded theory investigation into usefully coded parts is to use open coding. The goal of this coding process is to identify certain words and/or phrases that functioned as the signal for giving the data collected its first meaning. When words/phrases are repeated, they generate coding titles that identify a certain block or type of information with meaning that is relevant to the study.

As more data is gathered during the first or open coding phase, it will be placed under an open coding category, or it will create a new category within itself until data saturation occurs at the open coding level. The term "data saturation" refers to a moment in a study when the information gathered through data gathering becomes repetitive or redundant. Following the completion of the first coding phase, the first category was created. Following that, numerous more readings of the acquired data were carried out. As new features emerged, the data in the categories supplied attributes under which data expanded and developed, allowing for the establishment of new sub-categories.

As the researcher began to sort, arrange, and summarize the data in the field notes, the researcher used coding to evaluate the data. In this study, open coding was used to separate the data into fragments so that it could not only be used to define the different processes that were going on regarding learners and teachers who experienced and dealt with communication apprehension but also to make comparisons between the different fragments to glean additional meaning.

After that, axial and theoretical coding was implemented. These procedures assisted the researcher in accommodating continuous comparative analysis, which aids in the reorganization of codes into groups for prioritization during axial coding. The researcher kept lengthy notes termed "analytic memos" to document the new meanings that emerged from the data. These memoranda allowed for individual researcher conversations and analyses of the codes, as well as a tool to explore deeper into the meaning of the data, document and trace the forming sub-theories, and keep track of any concerns that arose during the analysis process. As the coding revealed more meaning, categories will be created, and more analytic memos will be made to aid in the identification of conglomerate chunks of meaning within the categories.

However, even though there is a lot of coding and memoing, the researcher must still interpret the data, which is always the case in a grounded theory study. This study's interpretive depiction was based on what the researcher discovered to be the most prevalent in the data. As a result, "defining an analytic focus" will be based on identifying the most often occurring codes. The emergent theory's analytic focus explains the impact of the teacher-learner interaction on the learner's writing process and product.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

How do learners describe their own experiences with communication apprehension?

When the participants were asked about the reasons why they were afraid to share their ideas. The testimonies of the participants described that the reasons for their communication apprehensions were: *"they do not want to be laughed by, do not want to be bullied, they are nervous and shy, and afraid or fear to the teacher."* The majority of the participants mentioned that they seldom share their ideas because they do not want to be laughed at. The participants who shared their experiences were P3, P4, P9, P10, P13, P15, P18, P20, P21, and P23.

Similarly, when they were asked regarding their experience that triggers communication apprehension. It shows that daily classroom experiences during discussion and recitations were situations where they mostly felt the hesitation in expressing their ideas, hence developing more their apprehension to communicate. Their testimonies revealed that most participants stated that they usually experience it in their English classes. Most of them became hesitant to share their ideas because they experienced being bullied and laughed at when they incorrectly answer a particular question from their teachers. The participants who shared those sentiments were P4, P7, P8, P12, P13, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, and P25.

Also, their anxiety was triggered when they shared their ideas whenever they speak incorrectly and mistakenly pronounce/read a word as the P3, P5, P7, and P25 shared what they experienced in their respective classes. P3 uttered— "When my teacher told me to read an article in the book. I mistakenly pronounce some terms, then my classmates laughed at me. Especially in English. I was being bullied". P25 gave the same response— "*It happened to me once. When I made a mistake in pronouncing a word in our English subject, my classmates laughed at me. My teacher told me to take my seat*".

What do learners understand about the effects of communication apprehension?

The initial and focused codes obtained by the researcher from the interviews conducted with the participants when asked regarding how they were affected when they refrained from speaking/sharing their idea are *dejection, intimidation, degradation, distress, social alienation, trepidation, traumatized, frustration, low self-esteem, and lost enthusiasm to cooperate*.

Based on the participants' responses, they were hurt, and they felt sad when they experienced communication apprehension. The fear of bullying fueled the learners' emotions not directly because of their incapacity to communicate and express their ideas.

More so, it is due to the humiliation that they have experienced from the people around them. Being laughed at and being bullied by their classmates are just some of the few effects of communication apprehension. In the present study, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P12, P15, P16, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, and P25 revealed they are emotionally affected.

Moreover, the researcher conducted theoretical coding to determine the theoretical codes. It is through analysis of the initial categories and the memo written by the researcher. The created theoretical codes were *emotionally affected and socially affected*.

Communication apprehension affects the learners emotionally and socially. The embarrassment that they felt and experienced leads to anxiousness. They lost their self-esteem and lessened their self-confidence. It is a severe problem even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The emergence of "emotional disturbance" and "social disparage" as the final theoretical categories. Guided by memo writing, the data corresponding to the initial categories; "dejection," "intimidation," "distress," "degradation," and "traumatized" provided an additional feature to the theoretical codes "emotionally affected" and "socially affected" which later gave more specific feature to the categories.

Theoretical Category 1: Emotional Disturbance

The first theoretical category recognized is "Emotional Disturbance." It refers to the effect of communication apprehension on elementary learners in which they feel uneasiness, shyness, intimidation, and dejection. The emotion felt by the learners is not directly because they were not able to share their ideas or express their feelings but based on what they experienced from the people around them. When learners became hesitant to talk, their observation of the people's initial reactions such as laughing, staring at them, and criticism lead to emotional disturbance.

The first theoretical category- "emotional disturbance", feeling intimidated, uneasiness, shyness, and dejection, manifests that learners have this kind of effect. Having "low self-esteem"

and "lack of self-confidence" are some of the factors that may lead to more development of communication apprehension. Moreover, emotional disturbance significantly affects the intrapersonal effects of the life of learners.

Theoretical Category 2: Social Disparage

The second theoretical category uncovered is "Social Disparage." It refers to the effect of the communication apprehension in which the elementary learners were socially affected. One of the attributes of the learners experiencing social disparagement is feelings of belittlement due to the degradation or humiliation experienced by a person. In the case of elementary learners, when they suffer embarrassment from their peers, most of them tend to withdraw their participation from the class. Because they do not want to be the clown of the class whenever they cannot express their ideas correctly, they tend to reserve and keep them independently.

On the other hand, "refusing help" and "social alienation" were some of the intervening conditions that affect social disparagement. When learners tend to refuse help and avoid being with others, this may worsen their communication apprehension. The learners who experienced belittlement due to communication apprehension may experience a hard time dealing with others. Social disparage significantly affects the interpersonal aspects of the life of the learners.

How do learners cope with communication apprehension if they experience (d) it?

The initial and focused codes were attained by the researcher when the participants were asked about the ways how they cope with communication apprehension. Based on the initial and focused coding conducted by the researcher, the initial categories obtained from the responses of the participants are avoidance, building a good relationship, consoling oneself, and reforming and uplifting oneself. These categories are necessary to determine the specific strategies that elementary learners are doing to deal with communication apprehension. This will enable the researcher to understand further the experiences of the learners.

The researcher comparatively analyzed the initial and focused codes to determine the initial categories. The participants' responses revealed that elementary learners know how to deal with what they experienced due to communication apprehension. Most of the participants stated that they ignore their classmates what their classmates are saying and doing whenever they incorrectly answer a particular question or whenever they mispronounce a word. The participants who stipulated that ignoring their classmates' coping mechanisms are P2, P5, P7, P11, P17, P18, and P22. It manifested that the learners have already learned how to shed their feelings at a young age whenever they have unwanted experiences.

Meanwhile, the other codes that transpired in the table are about some specific positive actions that elementary learners face to overcome communication apprehension. The codes were "talking to friends," "studying harder," and "improving oneself." It can be assumed from the responses of P8, P12, P14, P20, P24, and P25 that some elementary learners can think of specific ways how they can avoid communication apprehension. It is a good manifestation that they are learning life skills needed to cope with the challenges that they are experiencing.

Furthermore, after the generation of the initial categories, the researcher conducted theoretical coding. Theoretical codes were determined through analysis of the initial categories and the memo written by the researcher. As can be seen in table 10, the created theoretical codes are **self-control, self-governance, and good acquaintanceship.**

The occurrence of "maturity" and "friendship" as the other final theoretical categories. Guided by memo writing, the data corresponding to the initial categories; "avoidance," "consoling oneself," "reforming oneself," "uplifting oneself," and "building good relationship" provided an

additional feature to the theoretical codes “self-control” and “positive acquaintanceship” which later gave more specific feature to the categories.

Theoretical Category 3: Maturity

The third theoretical category that emerged is “maturity.” It is the best strategy that learners must deal with communication apprehension. It refers to the learners' ability to control their emotions despite the struggle that they are experiencing due to communication. It pertains to their capacity to handle frustrations and unpleasant situations and overcome them without any form of violence. It may not seem like a coping mechanism, but the researcher dramatically believed that the learners used their emotional maturity to maintain their enthusiasm for learning.

Theoretical Category 4: Friendship

The other category that emerged is “friendship.” This category refers to how the learners who experience communication apprehension choose to be surrounded by people who are dear to them to be able to overcome and relieve the emotions they are feeling. The learners build a good relationship with other people to find someone who can understand their limitations in sharing their ideas. This category is significant, for it will create a lasting affiliation. If the learners were able to maintain a friendship, they could develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.

On the other hand, the intervening condition that may affect these properties is “peer socialization.” It may affect friendship because there are some instances by which peers can negatively influence a person’s idea. The dimension that emerged from axial coding is “social network.” It covers the entire social interactions between the learners with communication apprehension and those who can confidently share their ideas and the interactions between the learners and the teachers.

How does a teacher manage a learner with communication apprehension?

The initial and focused codes were attained by the researcher when the participants were asked about the teachers' ways of managing learners with communication apprehension. This question was used to determine the strategy offered by teachers for learners with communication apprehension.

The categories are “*inspiring learners not to be afraid*”, “*enabling learners to communicate*”, “*supporting learners*”, and “*allowing self-realization*”.

Based on the responses of the participants, the teachers are also making ways to help learners who are afraid to share and express their ideas in front of the class. The majority of the learners stipulated that their teachers are helping them by “telling them not to be afraid”, “encouraging them to share their ideas”, and “telling them to study hard”. In the statements of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P17, P19, P20, P21, P22, P24 and P25, teachers are encouraging the learners to still participate in the class despite what they have experienced from their classmates.

Meanwhile, the other codes that transpired in the table are about the other ways the teachers do in helping learners with communication apprehension. The codes were “encouraging not to do negative things”, “pacifying nervousness” and “allowing self-realization”. Based on the responses of P15, P16, and P23, it can be assumed that there are other teachers who do not only encourage learners to freely express their ideas but at the same time, they are letting their learners realize what might be the consequence if they fail to communicate.

Furthermore, after the generation of the initial categories, the researcher conducted theoretical coding. The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the initial categories and the memo written by her to determine the theoretical code. As can be seen in table 12, the created theoretical code is ***providing emotional support***.

The occurrence of "psychological assistance" is the final theoretical category. Guided by memo writing, the data corresponding to the initial categories "inspiring learners not to be afraid", "supporting learners", "enabling learners to communicate", and "allowing self-realization" provided an additional feature to the theoretical code "providing emotional support" which later gave more specific feature to the categories.

Theoretical Category 5: Psychological Assistance

The fifth theoretical category that emerged is "psychological assistance". It refers to the strategy of teachers in handling learners with communication apprehension by helping them emotionally. It is done by encouraging them to continuously share their ideas and enabling them to communicate despite the challenges they encountered due to their apprehension. Provision of psychological assistance is vital to be able to develop the emotional well-being of the learners and relieve their negative feeling whenever they feel unwanted treatment from their classmates.

Based on the findings, what intervention model can be offered to develop the communication skills of elementary learners of Calamba Elementary School?

As an output of this study, an intervention model was developed to provide an intervention framework for Calamba Elementary School regarding communication apprehension and to develop the communication skills of the learners. The researcher come-up with the HALO (Holistic Approach towards Learners Oratory) Intervention Model, which the school can utilize in helping the helpings with communication apprehension to develop their communication skills. The underlying theory that emerged from this intervention model is the Takotalk theory. This model encompasses the two essential aspects of learners with communication apprehension. The first aspect is its effect on learners. Learners who were suffering from communication apprehension experienced emotional disturbance and social disparagement. It has led to the emergent second aspect, which unveiled what learners do to overcome and deal with their apprehension and what teachers are doing to help them. Demonstrating maturity, building friendships, and providing psychological assistance are specific activities that can help learners with communication apprehension.

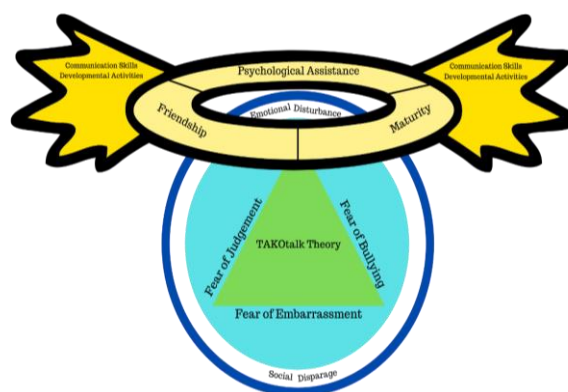


Figure 1. HALO Intervention Model

The idea of the word HALO in the intervention model is just the same as the connotation of the word "halo," the researcher uses this to explain how this intervention model works. Halo is a

ring that may light a thing or a person. Learners nowadays are very susceptible to what they hear and what they read. They tend to become anxious whenever they make mistakes quickly. They always want validation from other people. Relating it to the case of learners with communication apprehension, this intervention model suggests that the teachers might do the first step and provide activities that may develop learners' psychological and emotional well-being. Teachers may serve first as a light for the learners who are distressed because of the difficulty they are experiencing because of communication apprehension.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, learners must maintain their emotional well-being since they are quite anxious because of the barriers between teachers and them. They cannot fully express their ideas because of the limited interaction. They may contextualize Psychological First Aid activities intended for learners with communication apprehension. Afterward, if the teachers already developed the psychological well-being of the learners with communication apprehension, they could now provide intervention activities that may improve learners' communication skills.

“Takotalk” Theory

This theory suggests that learners failed to communicate with others not because they do not know what to say, they cannot express their ideas correctly and cannot read or pronounce terms correctly, but because of the fear of judgment from their classmates. Learners are hesitant to share their ideas because they are afraid that they might be bullied and humiliated. Indeed, communication apprehension is also relatable to other factors, such as social phobia. Based on the research of Pearson et al. (2011), they found that those with high levels of communication apprehension reported higher levels of social phobia.

ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

The following are the issues and implications drawn by the researcher based on the consolidated findings of the study:

The majority of the participants stipulated that the reasons for their communication apprehensions were the fear to be laughed at and afraid of bullying. It was also found that some of the learners were nervous and shy, and they were afraid of their teachers which is why they seldom shared their ideas, especially in front of the class. It implies that bullying is really one of the major reasons why learners developed communication apprehension. Also, the participants' testimonies revealed that most participants stated that they usually experience communication apprehension in their English classes.

Communication apprehension affects the learners emotionally and socially. They experienced emotional disturbance and social disparagement. They were hurt, and they felt sad when they experienced communication apprehension. The fear of bullying fueled the learners' communication apprehension. It affects a learner's daily life in school because he/she is not comfortable within the class, too nervous to talk, and afraid to make a mistake due to a lack of confidence to deal with others and the fear to get wrong and being commented on it and lost some confidence and became shy in the class, especially during oral recitation.

Most of the participants stated that they ignored what their classmates were saying and doing whenever they incorrectly answered a particular question or whenever they mispronounced a word. The majority of the learners developed maturity and build friendships to overcome communication apprehension. It is a good manifestation that despite the hardship they are experiencing due to how other people treat them because of communication apprehension, they still can manage to keep themselves at pace. Also, it shows despite the challenges elementary learners are experiencing in communicating with others, they are not considering communication apprehension on thinking of leaving the school.

The teachers are also making ways to help learners who are afraid to share and express their ideas in front of the class. Teachers were offering psychological assistance to the learners. It implies

that the teachers significantly affect the learners. Even in encouragement, learners gained confidence and tried their best to overcome their fears and hesitation in speaking or conversing with others.

The developed HALO intervention model is important since it can serve as a framework for the school in providing intervention activities that are appropriate for the learners with communication apprehension in the new normal.

REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT

Exploring this grounded theory study has provided meaningful results to the researcher. It provided different insights that are greatly beneficial in the researcher's task as a teacher. During this time of the pandemic, there is a need to examine the learners' communication skills. How are they communicating at home? What hinders them from sharing their ideas whenever they are attending their online classes?

The researcher encounters different challenges in doing this exploration. At first, she was hesitant because of the limitations due to the present health issue, the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by following the proper protocol, she was able to gather meaningful data. During the coding process, the researcher set out her judgments on the responses of the participants. She maintains theoretical sensitivity to come up with the themes that she presented. Because she follows the step-by-step procedure in the conduct of grounded theory research, she gained results worthy of being shared and presented.

With the initial findings that she obtained, she still felt unconvinced and uncertain with these initial results. She conducted a constant comparative analysis with the transcription, memos, and field notes to reach and come up with her core categories. The following few paragraphs presented the salient discovery of the researcher.

It saddens the researcher that the primary reason learners are afraid of conversing with others is the fear of bullying and humiliation. They do not want to be intimidated whenever they mistakenly share ideas, commit mistakes, and improperly read a passage. It leads to emotional disturbance and social disparage. Learners tend to keep their distance from others and try to keep their feelings inside. It may be a sad reality, but that is what transpired in the present study.

On the other hand, this exploration regarding communication apprehension among elementary learners has also led to a beautiful discovery about learners' generation. At present, despite the challenges brought by their experiences in dealing with communication apprehension, they could handle the crucial situation and develop coping mechanisms to overcome this fear. Learners maintain a friendship with others to release their emotions. They choose to be surrounded by good people, people who can share positivity, and those people who can be of great help for their improvement. Learners were also demonstrating maturity in dealing with their communication apprehension.

Teachers were also doing their part to help the learners with communication apprehension. They are emotionally supporting the learners by encouraging them to share their ideas and participate in every class discussion because these can help them develop their communication skills.

Moreover, with the presented findings, the researcher still questions the validity of her results. Because of this, she seeks the help of other qualitative research experts to check her data, interpretation, and the theoretical categories that she obtained. Alongside this process, she carefully re-examines, re-reads data and findings, and constantly compares it with her available memos and field notes before finally deciding on her final theoretical categories.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

The study focused on the experiences of learners of Calamba Elementary in Calamba City regarding communication apprehension. Allowing them to describe their experiences with the

topic helped the researcher to determine its causes and effects. Also, this research delved into the coping mechanisms of the learners who experienced communication apprehension. Moreover, this determined how a teacher manages a learner with communication apprehension. The strands of questions focused on the experiences related to communication apprehension. The findings of the study served as a basis for the development of an intervention model that can be utilized by teachers to develop communication skills among learners who are experiencing communication apprehension.

Future researchers may conduct a study testing the effectiveness of the developed intervention model or they may conduct another study exploring the schools' initiative to help learners with communication apprehension.

REFERENCES

- Amiri, Fatemih & Puteh, Marlia (2018). Oral Communication apprehension among International Doctoral Learners. *English Language Teaching*; Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 164-171
- Berowa, A. M. (2018). Levels of language anxiety toward English: A sample from Davao del Norte. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 8(3), 118-128.
- Blume, B. D., Baldwin, T. T., Ryan, K.C. (2013). Communication Apprehension: A Barrier to Learners' Leadership, Adaptability, and Multicultural Appreciation. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2013, Vol. 12, No. 2, 158-172. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0127>.
- Breines, J. G., & Chen, S. (2013). Activating the inner caregiver: The role of support-giving schemas in increasing state self-compassion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(1), 58-64. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2012.07.015
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral Communication Apprehension: A Summary of Recent Theory and Research. *Human communication research*, 4(1), 78-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1977.tb00599.x>
- McCroskey, J. C. (2012). Oral communication apprehension: A reconceptualization. *Communication Yearbook*, 6, 136-170.
- Meluch, Andrea, Feehan, Katie & Starcher Shawn (2019). Instructor Disclosures of Communication Apprehension and Learner Perceptions of Instructor Credibility in the Public Speaking Classroom. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Volume 31, Number 2, 299-309. ISSN 1812-9129
- Munz, Stevie M., and Colvin, Janet (2018) "Communication Apprehension: Understanding Communication Skills and Cultural Identity in the Basic Communication Course, " *Basic Communication Course Annual*: Vol. 30, Article 10.
- Pedrosa-de-Jesus, H., & Watts, M. (2012). Managing effect in learners' questions in undergraduate science. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(1), 102-116. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.646983
- Rimkeeratikul, Sucharat (2017). Graduate Learners of Two Similar Programs: A Comparison Study of Communication Apprehension when Speaking the English Language. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network Journal*, Volume 10, Issue 2
- Rimkeeratikul, Sucharat et al (2016). Communication Apprehension in L1 and L2 among First-Year Learners of a Graduate Program for Executives in a Public University. *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN) Journal*. Volume 9, Issue 1, 2
- Richmond, V. P., Wrench, J. S., & McCroskey, J. C. (2013). *Communication apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Strauss AL, Corbin JM (1990). *The basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE
- Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2014). English teachers' perceptions of the mother tongue-based education policy in the Philippines. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 2(4), 17-32.