

## Original Research Article

### THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL LITERACY AND ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS

#### ABSTRACT

This study determined the mediating role of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and engagement of students in the context of colleges and universities in Davao Oriental, Philippines. A non-experimental quantitative research design using descriptive-correlational research design was applied and employed stratified random sampling with 313 Education college students as sample. Data collection was made through survey instrument. Data analysis was done through Mean, Pearson-r, Multiple Regression and Medgraph using Sobel z-test. Results revealed that English speaking skills, social literacy and engagement were high. A positive correlation between English speaking skills and social literacy, English speaking skills and student engagement, and social literacy and student engagement was proven in the study. The findings affirmed that English speaking skills played a partial mediation, thus it cannot fully account on the influence of social literacy towards engagement of students. Moreover, a high level of English speaking skills helped increase students' capability to be highly engaged in academics and other school-related activities. It is recommended that administrators of tertiary education continue to have regular review, evaluation and implementation on the existing curriculum. Also, there is a need to implement the strengthening of English language as medium of instruction on subjects that use English language. For instance, an *English-only policy* is one of the best practices that schools should impose. Lastly, the researcher recommends the regular conduct of interviews such as entrance, yearly and exit interviews using English language.

**Keywords:** *Education, College Students, English Speaking Skills, Student Engagement, Social Literacy, Mediation*

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

Communication is an important form of conveying information. In fact, the voice, rhythm, and oral expression of speeches are valued much when it is properly conveyed (Marinho, et al. 4). However, speaking in public is one of the biggest fears encountered in college. It is one of the school-related activities that students should master in order to become a well-trained professional. According to one of the studies conducted by Marinho, et al. in 2017 (17), speaking in public is a predominant type of anxiety among college students and because of this, there have been issues on decreasing students' participation in school activities and learning that help improve literacy skills (Lloyd 2).

Despite the fact that it is an indication of students' motivational state of being in learning rather than a fixed characteristic trait of learning (Lloyd 2), The decreasing percentage of students' participation in school-provided activities has been alarming teachers in education throughout countries. Factors of student engagement include family, personal and the school. If none from the factors mentioned is present in a certain student, one is more likely to become disengaged in learning (Victoria State Government Education and Training).

In order to be referred as literate, an individual must contain integrated skills that are expected to be attained from education (Az-Zahra, et al. 162). There are also indicators that a student is disengaged from learning such as regular absences, low literacy, lack of interest at school, negative interactions with peers, behavioural issues and significant change in attitude (Victoria State Government Education and Training). There are studies that suggest that teachers should also make literacy experiences more relevant to students' interests, everyday life or important current events to keep them engaged in learning (AdolescentLiteracy.org).

According to Arthur and Davison, social literacy is both prerequisite and important requirement of an individual in education. They added that social literacy is also termed as social competence but social literacy is more broad and subtle and is a complex process when talking about how it is acquired (11). Moreover, the conduct of the study is important in order to emphasize the factors affecting the literacy of a student in the school setting and to examine if literacy influences the engagement of the students through their English Speaking skills.

According to Alvermann and Phelps as cited by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon in 2013 (376), in order for the student to learn and develop literacy, one must be engaged in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking through the active engagement in social interaction with others. Furthermore, socially interactive individuals are also engaged learners who acquire knowledge when they are able to speak to others and be actively involved. According to Marx, Simonsen and Kitchel, in some institutions, preferably in college, students' course engagement is one of the popular topics in researches (213). Frederics, Blumenfeld and Paris in 2004 as cited by Marx, et al. assert that college student engagement (SE) is a multidimensional concept which various researchers studied in order to understand different aspects to bridge success at the secondary and post-secondary levels of education (212). However, being

academically engaged requires a learner to express oneself by speaking. The problem on inarticulateness in English speaking leads them to just hold their opinion and participation in the class (Hui 17). According to Coates as cited by Delfino, student engagement is one of the significant concepts that are utilized to understand the conduct of the students towards the teaching-learning process (1). The institutions that provide students the needed understanding of their behaviour will give an indication on how the directions and academic practices must work inside the institution. Teachers and facilitators see this as one of the powerful tools in designing instructions and efficient educational strategies in making the most out of the learning experiences of the students (214). As labelled, engagement is a student's connection to learning and the learning environment which integrates behavioural, emotional and cognitive aspects and is evaluated through psychological processes and physical activities (Marx, Simonsen & Kitchel, 213).

There are several existing Social Literacy and Student Engagement studies. However, there's a dearth of studies that include the mediating role of English Speaking skills and its relationship to social literacy and student engagement making it the gap of the study. Hence, the conduct of this study is urgent and necessary to address the common problems that the Education students in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental encounter and to add more on the existing literature of studies. The input of this study will help the education system in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental to propose for a needed intervention to provide the students the needed support for improvement and enhancement of their English Speaking skills.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aims to determine the indirect effect of Social Literacy on Student Engagement as mediated by English Speaking Skills in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental. The following are the specific objectives.

1. To describe the level of Social Literacy in terms of:
  - 1.1. Intellectual Skills;
  - 1.2. Social Skills;
  - 1.3. Cooperation Skills; and,
  - 1.4. Social Attitudes and Values.
2. To ascertain the level of Student Engagement in terms of:
  - 2.1. Behavioral Engagement;
  - 2.2. Cognitive Engagement; and,
  - 2.3. Emotional/Psychological Engagement.
3. To measure the level of English Speaking Skills;
4. To establish the significance between:
  - 4.1. Social Literacy and Student Engagement;
  - 4.2. Social Literacy and English Speaking Skills;
  - 4.3. English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement; and,
5. To determine the significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among the Education students in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental.

### **Hypotheses**

The researcher has come up with the following hypotheses:

1. There is no established significance between:
  - 1.1. Social Literacy and Student Engagement;
  - 1.2. Social Literacy and English Speaking Skills;
  - 1.3. English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement; and,
2. There is no significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among the Education students in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental.

## Review of Related Literature

This section presents the different studies and related researches that support the idea of English speaking skills with its indicators: grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, content, fluency, and pronunciation; social literacy with its indicators: intellectual skills, social skills, cooperation skills, and social attitudes and values; and, student engagement with its indicators: behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional/psychological engagement.

### English Speaking Skills

Speaking is one among the four language skills. It is a productive and active skill which is used by an individual to interact with others through conversation process (Ashour 1). Speaking is a skill which requires attention through receptive skills more than literary skills. Thus, it is a skill in which individuals utter or produce words and specific sentences to convey meaning and generate ideas (7).

According to Husnawati, speaking is the skill which is very important for human existence in daily lives since every person needs to communicate (2). As an important skill a human should have, speaking comprises micro skills which include a part of speaking which should be mastered by a learner in order to communicate well with others (3).

Husnawati stressed that in education, English subject is one of the major subjects taught and English language is required as medium of instruction (1). English, as the lingua franca, refers to the use of English language as a medium of those individuals speaking in different languages (2). Ashour (8) and Raza (8) mentioned in their studies the sub skills that English speaking skills categorize. These are grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, content, fluency and pronunciation.

*Grammatical Accuracy.* The knowledge of language in the brain is called grammar. It is the product manifested by the language knowledge that a human brain develops (Li, 726). Grammatical accuracy refers to the correct utilization of words in sentence construction both/either in dialogue and/or writing (Study.com). In Skehan's article as cited by Pereira, Javier, Bermudez and Medina in 2018, grammatical accuracy is concerned with a learner's capacity to handle whatever level of language complexity she/he has and accuracy is essential for language to be automatic (129).

*Vocabulary.* Vocabulary has become a significant component in language proficiency since learners without necessary vocabulary knowledge cannot take enough

advantage of opportunities around such as interacting with others or within the self (Hazrat & Golamreza 1454). According to Kingsley and Grabner-Hagen, vocabulary curriculum begins with clear learning goals, a careful selection of key terms and the transformation of activities into quest challenges (545). Cheng added that the higher vocabulary size an individual has, the broader his language knowledge is. Vocabulary size refers to the number of words for which a learner knows (989).

*Content.* Content refers to the information and experiences that are intended to be grasped by the audience. Content is something that is expressed through medium such as speeches, literary and arts. Qamar denotes that a person is judged by the way he speaks, his tone, his choice of words, the content of what he is expressing, his speaking speed, etc. (294). However, Qamar added that it is natural for a speaker to be mentally blocked during speeches especially when the language is not his first language (*L1*) (295). The content of a material, such as speech, must have the body through the sequence of the outline of the speech itself. Usually, the audience looks after the content of the speech by the speaker. Hence, this is significant for an individual to be proficient in speaking. (Part II: Preparing Your Speech, 51).

*Fluency.* To be proficient in English or any other language, it is not simply all about the correct usage of vocabulary and grammar. An individual should consider the capacity to interact in social communication which entails that learners need to utilize hundreds of produced language that have own characteristics, intonation and patterns (Senra Silva, 212). Ellis and Sinclair as cited by Senra Silva, asserts that the attainment of fluency in both native and foreign languages involves the acquisition of memorized sequences of language (213). Ortiz-Neira denotes that fluency is not an easy aspect to define but the narrowest definitions only include a few features, typically pausing, hesitations and speech rate, whereas the broadest uses are virtually synonymous with speaking proficiency (115). Ahmed asserts language oral fluency and speech intelligibility are challenging processes that requires huge effort from both the teachers and the learners. Speech intelligibility has a great impact on how the student is able to express a meaningful communication and also affects the way of speaking that reflects on oral fluency of learners specifically EFL learners (1453). However, fluency in speaking can be blocked by the teachers through the process of corrective feedback. Hence, teaching oral fluency becomes a challenge to teachers (Ayand, Fatemeh & Sajad, 133).

*Pronunciation.* Gilakjani refers English pronunciation as one of the most difficult skill to acquire and learners should spend time in improving their pronunciation. Added to that, Gilakjani stresses that understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learner's competence and it is also one of the most significant structures of language instruction because good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to difficulties of learning (1249). In his prior study on pronunciation in 2016, Gilakjani points out that this field is one of the most important features in language learning but teachers do not explicitly teach it. It is one of the most difficult challenges that language teachers encounter because with the student's or the speaker's acceptable pronunciation, it covers the difficulty to notice the student's incorrect use of grammar and vocabulary (967).

Brabcová, Kateřina, and Radek defined *Received Pronunciation* as *foreign accent* which is the term usually used today (39). English is the international language

as followed in the Philippines. Tagalog is the national language but English is widely spoken all over the country and is one of the major subjects taught in Education. Well-educated Filipinos are relatively fluent English speakers and have better pronunciation compared to other English language learners in Asia (Mengqi, 1).

Speaking, as one of the four language skills, is an important skill that a person should practice and master from his childhood. It is also a skill that is repeated overtime and is learned through interaction of both speakers. Without a chance to speak and express his opinions and ideas, a person is likely to be misunderstood. In a broader sense, when a person can hardly speak, the difficulty may affect his interaction with others. Hence, the aspects of speaking skills must be given enough attention for development as these aspects affect each other.

## **Social Literacy**

Social literacy, as cited by Worthington, Maulfry, and Oers, plays a significant role in students' development. The competency of education to be attained always develops and dynamic along with the current times. This ability is important to instill in education and is one of the competencies that must be achieved because entering in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social literacy has become a product as well as a goal set by the school that automatically makes the quality of individual groups determined by their literacy level (147).

According to Taylor and Leung, social-interaction is an essential aspect of literacy learning and serves both as a context and a mode of learning. Educators can plan to create a classroom that promotes socialization and a community of learners where children interact socially and learn from each other (5). Teachers who are aware of the importance of socialization on students' literacy learning and who have knowledge and skills to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy can create a classroom from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds participate actively in a variety of different activities (6). Az- Zahra, Sardaki and Bachtiar assert that social literacy ability is a person's capability to integrate in implementing all knowledge, skills, including attitudes and values that he believes in social life (163). The skills comprising social literacy ability are intellectual skills, social skills, cooperative skills, and attitudes and values (164).

*Intellectual skills.* Az-zahra, et al defines intellectual skills as a mental operation that allows a person to acquire knowledge and control mental production (166). Paul and Edler refer intellectual skills to critical thinking skills. In critical thinking, students are expected to think critically on the information relevant to the questions they are trying to answer, problems they are trying to solve, and issues they are trying to resolve. A good critical thinker routinely checks the accuracy of information by making sure that they are considering the most important details and information before attempting to answer a question and that the information they have is sufficient to answer the question. Students who think critically also analyse the information used by others (37). Cacchiotti cites higher order cognitive skills have great influence on making meaningful connections which increase students' engagement (8).

Hummel points out that critical thinking allows people to live rational, productive, reasonable, and empathetic lives. An individual should have the crucial skills for

conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Hence, without these, people would fail to succeed and intend to focus on survival only. Thus, critical thinking promotes the essence of a human to become better citizens because students learn to understand how their actions and thoughts create impact and affect others (5).

*Social skills.* Kılıç and Güngör Aytar refer social skills to the skills that increases the individual's relationship with his/her environment positively such as empathy, participation to group activities, helping each other, communicating with others, negotiation, and problem solving. Social skills help in motivating good relationships between people. However, social skills are crucial for academic achievement, general well-being, mental health and social achievement (186).

According to Riggio as cited by Edmonson, et al, social skills integrate affective processes with social processes to define dimensions of social skills. Riggio describes these dimensions of communication into three: sensitivity, expressivity, and monitoring/control; while the mode of communication is divided into two: verbal (social) and nonverbal (emotional). Thus the independent dimensions of social skills are social sensitivity, emotional sensitivity, social expressivity, emotional expressivity, social control, and emotional control. In conclusion, to be referred as socially literate individual, one must possess these six independent dimensions of social skills in proportion (576-577).

*Cooperation skills.* Education should prepare college students for a complex, pluralistic, high-technology world that is constantly evolving and changing. In lieu of this, classrooms provide portion of the students' development (To learn by doing, 49). Glakas asserts that studies have shown that cooperative skills can be learned through differentiated learning activities that do not require individuality. A student's cooperative effort generally results in some sort of reinforcement and it usually suggests if the learner needs development (28).

Klorkmaz cites that there are studies on the positive effects of cooperative learning on the academic success of the students and on their social development, thinking ability, self-confidence, learning skills, metacognitive levels, problem-solving abilities, positive attitude towards studying in a group, positive attitude towards learning and their courses, internal motivations and improving collaborative working ability (2).

*Social attitudes and values.* Atik and Özer describe attitude in school as one of the factors that have significant impact on students' school experiences and educational outcomes. One of these outcomes is academic achievement. It is expected from a student that has positive attitude to become successful at school, while students who show negative attitude would probably exhibit experiences such as failure at school (442).

Moreover, Atik and Ozer agree that teachers play an important role which affects the students' attitude development (452). Seker considers positive attitudes to be helpful in students who aim for academic achievement. Hence, teachers praise students with good attitudes in and out the classroom (348). However, in his study among middle-school children in Turkey in 2020, he found out that as higher the grade level of the student becomes, his attitude towards the school decreases (352). Thus, students who possess positive attitudes at school are found to be more successful than that of the others with negative attitudes at school (Ak & Sayil, 297).

Furthermore, Shu and Chen refer values to a person's overall view and overall evaluation of the surroundings, things or object which are rules and guidelines from one person to measure the external things (118-119). A value is an important role of the student's mental and physical development. It affects the person's behaviour, attitude and personality development. It is a factor that helps an individual to judge right from wrong, good or evil, honor from shame, views important factor in social life, make choices, and develop moral character in life (121). Thus, as the student matures, the cultivation of values is expected to prosper through the help of school education forming into a system. Schools are instruments where students gradually form and build their own values which are based on the most important factors such as personal desires, acceptance and growth of new knowledge, group relationships and individual relationships (119).

As a person interacts with others around him, it is important that he/she is knowledgeable enough to consider developing the required skills. When a person's intellectual skills is developed, he/she is likely to think critically, create judgments, makes decisions, select and evaluate ideas carefully, and the like. On the other hand, when a person is socially skilled, he/she is likely to be confident in getting involved with the society where he belongs.

Furthermore, when a person is cooperative, he/she is developing his cooperation skills. These skills will help him/her take part in the society where he belongs to. Lastly, when a person's positive attitude and values are maintained and practiced, he/she is likely to become a holistic individual and good citizen of his society. Therefore, when these skills are properly maintained, a person is referred to as socially literate individual.

## **Student Engagement**

The general definition of student engagement is involvement or commitment. To basically define student engagement, Bagheri and Mohamadi refer it to the willingness of the student to join in routine to school activities, such as attending classes regularly, submitting school works, and other general students' activities in the campus (4). However, the easiest way to understand student engagement is that students' activity, involvement, and efforts in their learning task is related to their academic achievement because the student senses if the activity is purposeful to their academics and desirable educational outcomes. Students are engaged when they know they can benefit from the activities linked to getting high grades, student satisfaction and perseverance (5).

According to Dougherty, student engagement was characterized by what Reschly and Christenson termed as *conceptual haziness* because there was a little agreement on what student engagement really means (10). Lloyd (2) asserts student engagement as an indication of students' *motivational state of being* in learning, rather than a fixed characteristic trait of learning. Furthermore, Student engagement has multidimensional characteristic that are termed as Behavioural engagement, Emotional/Psychological engagement and Cognitive engagement (Bagheri & Mohamadi 5).

*Behavioural Engagement.* The observable component of student engagement is behavioural engagement (Carter 34). According to Bagheri and Mohamadi, behavioural engagement comes from the idea of involvement such as participation in academic and

social activities, energetic attendance, assignments and task completion. Added to that, students have the ability to follow rules and directions following classroom norms, on top of coming to class on time and avoiding unnecessary negative behaviors (6). Sun and Bin refer behavioural engagement as a more active, lasting and effective state of behaviour as it is a result of a learner's information-exchange tasks with learning resources under the control of necessary tools for learning (2207). Dougherty agrees to the definition of behavioural engagement and refer it as student's involvement in school including activities, positive conduct (pertaining to antisocial behaviors), participation in classroom learning and academic tasks, and participation in extracurricular activities at school (12-13).

On the other hand, students can also be behaviorally disengaged. Lloyd defines this as behavioural disaffection and the students who are academically withdrawn, inattentive and effortless are behaviorally disengaged (6). This action is a result of various factors such as boredom, hardly-understood lessons, unattainable tasks, and students lack of academic effort. Students who are passive and behaviorally disengaged are those following class rules; however, they do not try hard in academic achievements (7).

*Cognitive Engagement.* Bagheri and Mohamadi describe cognitive engagement as a desire to go beyond the minimum school requirement. It is a preference for challenge that draws from the idea of psychological investment in learning (6). Barlow and Brown cite that cognitive engagement is abstractly defined in parts by students' psychological investment and motivation while its content is difficult to measure because it consists of immeasurable ideas such as performance, persistence, and goal orientation. However, studies on cognitive engagement use instruments to assess by the observable behaviors in students (2). Carter also defines cognitive engagement as an important factor which incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert effort necessary to understand complex ideas as well as master difficult skills. Thus, it focuses on individual investment in learning, self-regulation, and strategies for learning (19).

According to Stephenson, cognitive engagement involves the ability to engage in self-regulated learning and an appreciation for the value of learning. With the presence of this component, students are motivated to learn, both in and out of the classroom (1). Yuan (647) stresses that the definition of cognitive engagement fall into two dimensions. One group specifies a psychological engagement and the other group targets cognition and emphasizes strategic learning. Cited also from Yuan's study in 2020, a positive cognitive engagement plays a significant role in English language classroom (649).

*Emotional/Psychological engagement.* Emotional engagement is comprised by the students' sense of belongingness, feeling of competence, and motivation towards the concept of education. There are factors that are all said to contribute to the students' willingness to participate. These factors include the positive and negative feedbacks from peers, teachers and administrators, and the school itself (Bagheri & Mohamadi 6). The concept of interest in school, identification with the school, belongingness, and positive attitude about learning in school belongs to Emotional engagement (Charkhabi et al. 2).

According to Dougherty (21-22), the feeling of belongingness has been found to predict academic performance across extensive indicators which include Grading Point

Average (GPA), standardized test scores, reading performance, school effort, absenteeism, and grades. According to Lam, et al., as cited by Dougherty, these factors are linked to academic achievement through another form of emotional engagement. In addition, students with high level of school belongingness experience more positive emotions and lesser disengagement in school. According to Finn as cited by Carter, emotional engagement is the affective component of engagement as an emotional bond or attachment students form in the institution (35). It is also referred to as positive and negative emotions a learner experiences in response to the teachers, peers, and the educational environment. Thus, a student is likely to enjoy education when he is emotionally engaged. Otherwise, the student with low emotional engagement is likely to experience boredom, sadness, anxiety or anger (Stephenson, et al. 1).

To be academically engaged, there are aspects that a person should consider. The three factors that measure a person's engagement are important in developing his/her active participation. Participation or involvement contains different aspects such as behavioral engagement, emotional/psychological engagement and cognitive engagement. When these aspects are properly maintained and practiced, his actions towards engaging into different activities, becomes a habit and gradually becomes learning.

### Conceptual Framework

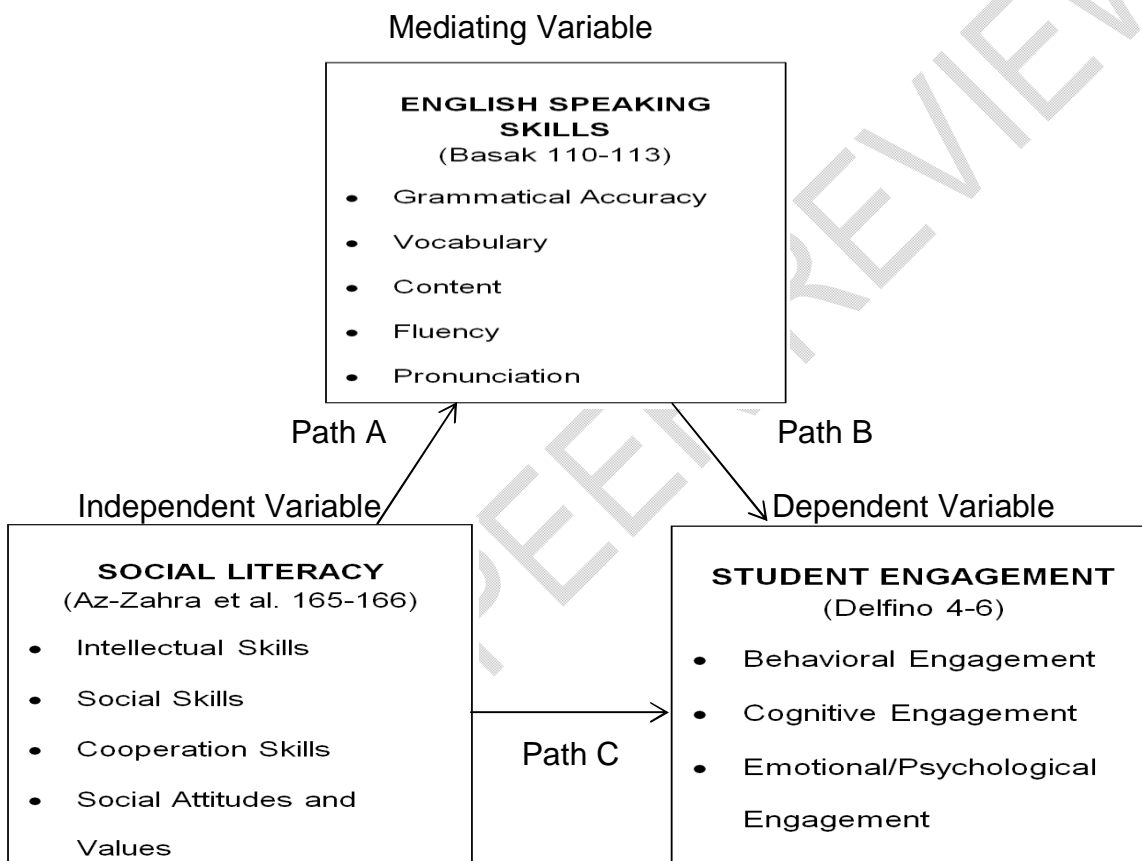
The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1. In this study the independent variable is social literacy by Az-Zahra, H., Sardaki, S. and Bachtiar (163-164). It contains the indicators which include: *intellectual skills*; *social skills*; *cooperation skills*; and, *attitudes/values*. *Intellectual skills* include the ability to: a) identify and define issues, b) make hypotheses, write conclusions based on information, c) analyze and synthesize data, d) distinguish facts and opinions, e) formulate causal factors, f) submit opinions from different perspectives, g) make valuable judgment in making decisions. *Cooperation skills* include the ability to a) take roles in groups, b) participate in group discussions c) participate in making group decisions. *Social skills* include the ability to a) social sensitivity; b) control self, c) exchange ideas and experiences with others. The *attitudes and values* include: a) knowing common values that are employed in the society, b) making decisions involving two choices based on value consideration, c) knowing guaranteed human rights for all citizens, d) developing loyalty as citizens, e) developing respect for the ideals and heritage of the nation, f) developing a sense of brotherhood among human beings.

The dependent variable is student engagement by Delfino (2) with the succeeding indicators: *behavioural engagement*; *emotional/psychological engagement*; and, *cognitive engagement*.

*Behavioural engagement* refers to the students' participation in academic and extracurricular activities; *emotional/psychological engagement* refers to students' positive and negative reaction to peers, teachers and school; and, *cognitive engagement* talks about students' thoughtfulness and willingness to master difficult skills.

The mediator of this study is the English speaking skills of students by Basak (43-44). The English speaking skills of students are evaluated in terms of *fluency*,

*pronunciation, content, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Fluency* refers to the ability of the students to use language for communication. *Pronunciation* refers to the ability of the students to produce sounds and follow stress and intonation. Those abilities must be in an acceptable manner. *Content* refers to the students' ability to communicate effectively, respond well to the topic, explain well and give specific examples about the topic. *Vocabulary* refers to the ability of the students to use necessary words and to understand the vocabulary questions. *Grammatical Accuracy* refers to the ability of the students to produce suitable syntactical and morphological patterns in a given speech. It also refers to the students' ability to master a language as a system.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study

## METHOD

This chapter presents the research design, research locale, population and sample, research instrument, data collection procedure statistical tool/treatment of data, ethical consideration and it deals with the method used in conducting the research.

### Research Design

This study used the quantitative design method of research using descriptive method technique. The plan and structure of this research is to provide credible answers to research hypotheses. Its purpose is to describe obtainable characteristics such as achievements, attitudes, behavior and relationships. The descriptive quantitative method is appropriate for the present investigation for it deals with the mediating role of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and engagement of Education students. The variables in the study are not manipulated; they were only identified and are studied as they occur in the natural setting (Systematic Reviews).

Descriptive-survey research is an appropriate method to identify the possible mediating role of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Engagement of Education students. Descriptive survey involves the collection of data to either test a hypothesis or describe the variables mentioned in the study. Data, which are typically numeric, will be collected through surveys (Espinosa 18). It seeks to describe the current status of an identified variable. Systematic collection of information requires careful selection of the units studied and careful measurement of each variable (Systematic Reviews).

### Research Locale

The findings of this study were specific to the context of Education students in the colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The possibility for the overall applicability of the results was limited by the scope and sample used in the study. Accordingly, even though there could be common structures, the findings of the study have no overall applicability to other systems.

Presented in Figure 2 is the map of the Philippines highlighting the Province of Davao Oriental consisting of 17 regions in which the municipality of Governor Generoso, San Isidro and Mati City, Province of Davao Oriental are located in Region XI. Moreover, presented in the figure was the vicinity map of Davao Oriental in which the mentioned municipalities are located.

The selected colleges/universities in Governor Generoso, San Isidro, and Mati City were chosen as the research settings. The possibility for the general applicability of the findings was limited by the scope and the sample to be used in the study. Accordingly, even though there could be common features, the findings have no general applicability to other systems.

Presented in Figure 2 is the map of Davao Oriental consisting of 10 municipalities in which the municipality of Governor Generoso, San Isidro, and Mati City, Province of Davao Oriental are located (National Economic and Development

Authority – Region XI). Moreover, the same figure also presented the vicinity map of the respondents in which the colleges in Davao Oriental is located.

The venue of the study was located at the three colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The respondents were the 314 Education students enrolled in the colleges/universities. Furthermore, the places of the respondents and the conduct of the study were located in the municipalities of Governor Generoso, San Isidro and Mati City, Davao Oriental, Philippines.

### **Population and Sample**

The actual respondents therein of the study were composed of 314 Education students in different majors from three different colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The researcher used the Raosoft formula to know the actual number of student respondents in this study.

Moreover, the researcher considers the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the selection of the respondents of the study. The student respondents are bona fide students and are officially enrolled for the Academic Year 2021-2022 in the three different colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. A letter of permission to conduct the study was explained to these student respondents. The student respondents who have voluntarily agreed with the informed consent were included in the survey. They were the students aged eighteen (18) years old and above and are taking up Education Courses. Regardless of the major, anyone, as long as they are enrolled in Education Program participated in the study.

On the other hand, the students who have not voluntarily agreed with the informed consent were excluded from the survey. Also, the students who were not enrolled in Education Program did not participate in the study. Education students, whose ages are seventeen (17) years old and below, were discouraged as well to participate in the study.

Furthermore, the students had the choice not to answer the survey questionnaire or participate in the study. Hence, the researcher considered the students who decided to withdraw during the actual administration of the survey questionnaires.

### **Research Instrument**

Three major research instruments have been highlighted in this study. The independent variable questionnaire was adapted from (Az-Zahra, et al. 165-166) on social literacy. The questionnaire measures by the respondents' frequency of appearance on the social literacy which focuses on *intellectual skills; social skills; cooperation skills; and, social attitudes and values*.

The Likert Scale was used as basis in describing the level of the *social literacy*. Likert Scale requires individuals to tick on the box/blank in response to a large number of items concerning an attitude, object, and stimulus.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

After the approval of the panel members, the researcher has undergone the following steps and procedures in gathering data for the study. The researcher asked for permission from the office of the Presidents of the colleges or university to conduct the study among the Education students. Upon the approval, the letter of endorsement has been used to accommodate the researcher to administer the survey questionnaire to the respondents of the study. Moreover, the researcher has written another letter to conduct the study to instructors and professors in the respective colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The researcher asked for approval from the Presidents of the colleges/universities and the instructors to distribute survey questionnaires through the *google form* platform to their respective students.

However, due to some health restrictions and because of the pandemic, in order to avoid the rapid transmission of the CoViD-19 virus, the researcher chose to conduct the study online through a link that was provided to the instructors. The instructors have disseminated the link to the students. Furthermore, the researcher has retrieved the responses after the respondents answered all the items. Finally, the researcher tallied and tabulated all the data gathered from the respondents and has undergone statistical analysis. The statistical results was analyzed and interpreted by a personally chosen, expert statistician. With the data, conclusions have been drawn and recommendations were formulated based on the findings of the study.

### Statistical Tools

The following are the statistical tools to be employed by the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the data:

**Mean and Frequency.** This was used to determine the level of English speaking skills on the relationship of social literacy and engagement of the Education students in the college/university.

**Pearson r.** This was used to find out if there is a significant relationship between social literacy and engagement of the Education students in the college.

**Regression.** This was employed to determine the domain of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and engagement of the Education students in the college.

## RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study that was conducted in the context of the three colleges and university in Davao Oriental among the 313 college students taking up Education.

In Table 1 below, the level of social literacy among the Education students of the colleges and university in Davao Oriental has a weighted mean of 3.94 with a standard deviation of .538 and a verbal interpretation of high. The results show that *social skills* has the highest mean value of 4.16 which is described as high. Meanwhile, *social attitudes and values* has the lowest mean value of 4.07 which is also described as high. Since 3.94 falls within the range of 3.40-4.19, this means that social literacy is observed in many occasions by the education students.

**Table 1. Social literacy among Education Students in the Context of Colleges and University in Davao Oriental**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
intellectual skills	3.45	.602	high
social skills	4.16	.689	high
cooperation skills	4.09	.713	high
social attitudes and values	4.07	.577	high
Overall	3.94	.538	high

In Table 2 below, the level of English speaking skills among education students in the context of colleges and university in Davao Oriental has an overall weighted mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of .546 described as high. Correspondingly, *fluency* has the lowest mean value of 3.41 and a standard deviation of .616, having the descriptive interpretation of high. All of the indicators got a mean score ranging from 3.41-3.46. This means that the English speaking skills is manifested by the education students in many occasions.

**Table 2. English Speaking Skills among Education Students in the Context of Colleges and University in Davao Oriental**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
grammatical accuracy	3.44	.621	high
vocabulary	3.46	.599	high
content	3.46	.592	high
fluency	3.41	.616	high
pronunciation	3.45	.767	high
Overall	3.44	.546	high

In Table 3 below, the level of engagement among the Education students of the colleges and university in Davao Oriental has a weighted mean of 3.84 with a standard deviation of .523 and a verbal interpretation of high. The results show that *cognitive engagement* has the highest mean value of 3.95 which is also described as high. On the other hand, *emotional engagement* has the lowest mean value of 3.75 which is also described as high. Since 3.84 falls within the range of 3.40-4.19, this means that engagement is observed in many occasions by the education students.

**Table 3. Engagement among Education Students in the Context of Colleges and University in Davao Oriental**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
behavioral engagement	3.82	.575	high
cognitive engagement	3.95	.591	high
emotional engagement	3.75	.567	high
Overall	3.84	.523	high

Revealed in Table 4 below are the results of the test of relationship between social literacy and engagement, social literacy and English speaking skills, and English speaking skills and student engagement. The relationship is significant if the p-value is

less than 0.05. On the other hand, the relationship is not significant if the p-value is more than 0.05. Reflected on the table below, social literacy and student engagement has an  $r$ -value of 0.825 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that there is a significant relationship between social literacy and student engagement. Social literacy is correlated with student engagement signifying a positive correlation, thus, rejecting the null hypothesis.

In addition, exhibited in the Table 4 below is the result of the test relationship between social literacy and English speaking skills. The results reveal that social literacy is positively correlated with English speaking skills with an  $r$ -value of 0.631 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the social literacy is positively correlated with English speaking skills, hence, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Lastly, the result of the test relationship between English speaking skills and student engagement has a positive correlation with an  $r$ -value of .617 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that English speaking skills is positively correlated with student engagement; therefore, the null hypothesis stating no significant relationship is rejected.

**Table 4. Correlation Analysis of the Variables**

Pair	Variables	$r_{xy}$	$p$ -value	Decision on Ho
IV and DV	social literacy and student engagement	0.825	<0.000	Rejected
IV and MV	social literacy and English speaking skills	0.631	<0.000	Rejected
MV and DV	English speaking skills and student engagement	0.617	<0.000	Rejected

Presented in Table 5 below is the regression analysis showing the influence of social literacy and engagement of students as mediated by English speaking skills. The data in the table were utilized as input to the *medgraph*. In Step 1 (Path c), social literacy as the independent variable (IV) significantly predicts engagement of students, the dependent variable (DV). In Step 2 (Path a), social literacy (IV) significantly predicts the English speaking skills, the mediating variable (MV). In step 3 (Path b), English speaking skills (MV) significantly predicts engagement of students (DV). In step 4, the combined role of social literacy and English speaking skills on engagement of students is significant.

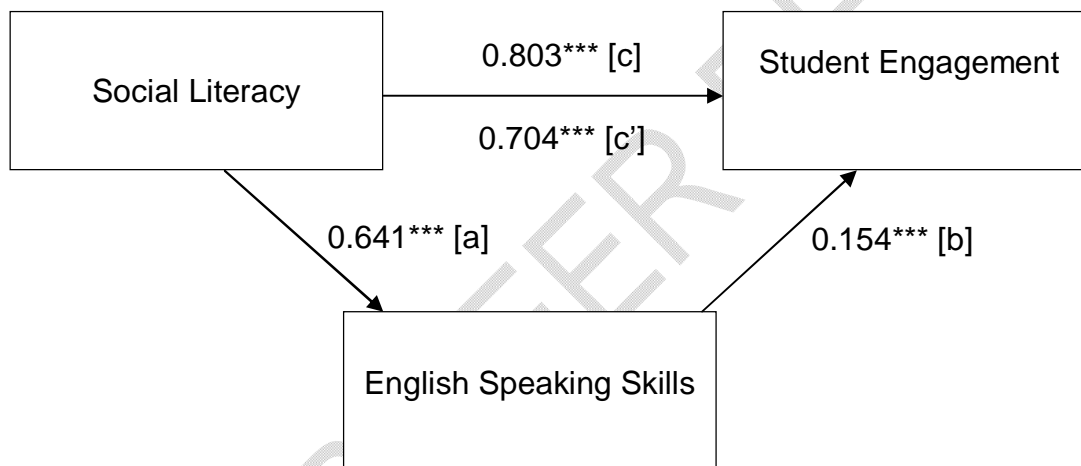
The researcher affirmed that mediation is significant and there is partial mediation. First regression, the independent variable (social literacy) affects the dependent variable (student engagement) at beta coefficient of 0.803 with p-value of less than 0.05 and the relationship is significant. Second regression, the independent variable (social literacy) affects the mediating variable (English speaking skills) at beta coefficient of 0.641 with a p-value of 0.05 and the relationship is significant. Third regression, the mediating variable (English speaking skills) affects the dependent variable (student engagement) at beta coefficient 0.154 with a p-value of less than 0.05

and the relationship is significant. Finally, the dependent variable (student engagement) is regressed on both the independent variable (social literacy) and the mediator (English speaking skills). Since the coefficient of the social literacy has been reduced from 0.803 to 0.704, but still significant, partial mediation of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and engagement of students is achieved.

**Table 5. Regression analysis showing the influence of social literacy to the engagement of students as mediated by English speaking skills**

Step	Path	B	S.E.	$\beta$
1	c	.803	.031	.825*
2	a	.641	.045	.631*
3	b	.154	.039	.723*
4	c'	.704	.039	.723*

\*  $p < 0.05$



**Fig.3. Flow chart showing Mediation Analysis**

**Table 6. Medgraph showing the variables of the study**

Sobel z-value	3.83683, $p < 0.01^{**}$
Percentage of the total effect that is mediated	12.303098%
Ratio of the indirect to direct effect	0.140291

### Effect Size Measures

Unstandardized Coefficients

Total:	.803
Direct:	.704

Indirect:	.641
Ratio Index:	.798

To assess the significance of the mediating role, the use of a medgraph which involves Sobel z-test was utilized for further mediation. Full mediation will be attained if the role of the IV on the DV is not significant at the last step in the analysis. With this, all of the roles are mediated by the mediating variable. Partial mediation will be achieved if the regression coefficient is reduced but remains significant in the last step. Part of the IV is mediated by the MV but other parts are either direct or mediated by other variables which are not included in the model. In this case the effect of social literacy (IV) on the engagement of students (DV) is weakened as revealed in the lowered beta value after English speaking skills, thus, showing a significant relationship that implies a partial mediation.

As shown in the Mediation Analysis above, Sobel z-value of 3.83683 yielded a p-value of less than 0.05, thus, significant partial mediation occurred. The association between social literacy (IV) and student engagement (DV) has been significantly reduced through the inclusion of the mediating variable which is English speaking skills. It is visible in the graph that .803 is significantly reduced to 0.704 in the succeeding regression. The effect size which is 0.798 measures how much of the effect of social literacy (IV) on the engagement of students (DV) can be attributed to the indirect path (IV to MV to DV). The total effect (0.803) is the raw correlation between social literacy (IV) and student engagement (DV). The direct effect (0.704) is the size of the correlation between social literacy (IV) and student engagement (DV) with the inclusion of English speaking skills (MV) in the regression. The indirect effect which is 0.641 is the original correlation between the IV and the DV that undergoes through the MV to the DV. In terms of the ratio index, it seems that about 79.8% of the total effect of the IV on the DV goes through the MV, and about 20.2% of the total effect is either direct or mediated by other variables not included in the model.

## DISCUSSION

Presented in this chapter are the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations of the data on the mediating role of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and engagement of students. The discussion is arranged according to what is set in the research objectives. The research objectives to be discussed are to determine the following: describe the level of social literacy; ascertain the level of student engagement; measure the level of English speaking skills; establish the significance between social literacy and student engagement, social literacy and English speaking skills, English speaking skills and student engagement; and, determine the significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among the Education students in the context of colleges in Davao Oriental.

### **Social Literacy**

The level of social literacy derived from the responses is high. This means that the level of social literacy is observed in many occasions. All of the indicators: *intellectual skills; social skills; cooperation skills; and social attitudes and values* were described as high. In Wilmms' study in 2001 about the impact of literacy skills of youth, it was found out that inequalities in the literacy skills are associated with the educational background. This supports the idea of Megan Carnaghi in 2009 which states that social literacy deals with the progress of intellectual skills, social skills, cooperation skills, and social attitudes and values. Carnaghi added that these factors fuel up the aspiration and capacity of the person to respond appropriately in the complexity of his surroundings. One example that Carnaghi pointed, in the context where the development of a student's educational career, it is normal for him to learn social and moral responsibility, as well as his responsibilities in the society where he belongs to be regarded as a good citizen. However, with regards to education, social literacy sticks to a goal in helping the students obtain the skills needed to understand the different social phenomena and the rapid changes in the modern society and how these factors affect the students' life in general.

On the other hand, in 2016, the study of Al-Zahra et al. has concluded that social literacy relies on the existence of four factors namely the indicators of the *independent variable* presented in this study. The findings of the study show that there are differences in the literacy skills of the youth that are associated with the educational background of their parents. In addition, these differences are significantly higher in other countries where the study has been conducted. In other words, the discrepancies are believed to have effect in the economic development for some reasons such as jobs which requires technology advancements and other sectors that require understanding of integrated disciplines such as language and arithmetic (162). They even added that because of these reasons, the students' social literacy skills are interesting and important to be given attention through further study. This will also support not just the cognitive function of a student but also the abilities that reinforce and take into action what they learned and eventually take part and contribute to the society (163).

Further, the high level of intellectual skills is aligned with Sastre-Riba's expression of high intellectual ability which demands good cognitive management. This is also according to a number of researchers (Steiner; Synder, Nietfeld, & Linnenbrink-

Garcia) which assumes that intellectually gifted students show significant differences in regard to some intellectual ability such as metacognitive regulation, and a remarkable ability to define ideas, focus on specific matter, balance situations, and efficiently solve problems (122).

Moreover, the high level of social skills is conformed to the findings of Lake in 2018 which states that these skills are an important aspect of life and suggested that students should get enrolled in schools to be able to practice socialization and interaction with others. Lake also stressed that groups are great place to learn social skills because they usually provide direct instruction, modeling, role playing, team building activities, and positive reinforcement.

The high level of cooperation skills is aligned to the findings of the study of Mendo-Lázaro, Santiago et al. in 2018 which emphasized that the acquisition of the competencies that define each university degree cannot be achieved through the exclusive use of traditional methods. In simple words, the researchers believe that cooperative learning is a valuable and is a significant tool in order to produce students with satisfactory outcomes.

Additionally, the high level of social attitudes and values is notable in the study conducted by the OECD in 2019. The study confirmed that social attitudes and values are key parts of the curriculum around the world. Technically, this is a total one discipline that should be taught among learners in different school levels at different contexts (4-8). In the same study, it was found out that as schools, workplaces, and communities become more ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse, it is important to emphasize the relationship of knowledge, attitudes, skills and values. These aspects are important in building up individuals to be good citizens of the communities (12).

### **Student Engagement**

The level of student engagement derived from the responses is high. This connotes that the level of student engagement among the education students is observed in many occasions. The indicators *behavioral engagement*, *cognitive engagement*, and *emotional/psychological engagement* were described as high.

Behavioral engagement is described as high in this study. It supports the claim of Darling-Aduana in 2019 that it is important in learning. In fact, the study among students who take up face-to-face and online classes distinguished differences most importantly the engagement that happens between students' interaction. Though, behavioral engagement alone does not prove learning, it serves as a preconditioning element to learning.

Likewise, cognitive engagement is described as high in this study. This is congruent to the study of Barlow, A., Brown, S., Lutz, B. *et al.* in 2020 which states that there are evidences show that students who are actively engaged with learning materials demonstrate greater learning gains than those who are inactively engaged. The study among the engineering students on cognitive engagement proved to be a significant component of an educational experience.

Similarly, the high level of emotional and psychological engagement is aligned to the study of Tang, Y. and Hew, K.F. in 2022 on the effects of mobile instant messaging on student engagement. The study found out that when speaking about emotional and psychological aspect, there is no significant difference found between the two FGDs. Instead, it helps in improving intimacy and interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, the significant relationship between social literacy and student engagement is in congruence with the views of Hurst, Wallace and Nixon in 2013. The study examined the importance of social interaction on students' learning by reflecting on their classroom experiences. In their study, it was found out that those students in three different college courses perceived that social interaction improved their learning by enhancing their knowledge of literacy and teaching as well as their critical thinking and problem solving skills (375).

### **English Speaking Skills**

English speaking skills garnered a high level of description. This means that the level of English speaking skills is observed in many occasions. All of the indicators: *grammatical accuracy; vocabulary; content; fluency; and, pronunciation* have the same high level of description.

The high level of grammatical accuracy is an indication that students need to have high skills in grammatical accuracy in order to promote high engagement. This is in congruence to the study of Sioco and De Vera in 2018 about the grammatical competence of 177 junior high school students. The study claimed that only 90.4 % of the respondents were found to have "average" grammatical competence (91) which is most likely to be equivalent to the high level of grammatical accuracy based upon the results of this study. However, a certain study in China in 2014, is inconsistent with the results of this study. Zhiqin Wang found out that in mastering grammatical accuracy, the one-way process of teaching English language is ineffective. Chinese students, since most of them are learning English as Foreign Language, need to have more practices and activities to learn such (113).

Likewise, the high level of vocabulary signals that this area should also be given priority when learning English speaking skills. This result is within the range of the study of Bok-Myung Chang in 2011 (193) about the role of English language education in Asian context which articulated that the Philippines is the third largest English-speaking country (Bolton & Bautista; Gonzalez). However, in a study conducted in the Philippines by Calub and Calub in 2017 among the college students taking up Education courses, there was a significant difference on the English vocabulary between the college students from state universities and private universities. The results show that students from state universities have higher English vocabulary skills that those from private universities (34).

Moreover, the results of this study show high level of content in English speaking skills. This is in congruence to the results from the study of Samanhudi in 2013. The findings revealed that students' major problem in mastering English speaking skills are the following: *grammar, vocabularies, pronunciation, among others and psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence and nervous* (2). However, the findings of the study also revealed that *speaking with content program* should be established to prepare the students to speak in English efficiently (11).

Furthermore, the high level of fluency in English speaking skills connotes good impression to students. Since fluent English speakers are practically confident and most likely to be regarded as academically excellent students. This is in line with the study of Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi in 2015. The statistical analyses of the study revealed that there are significant differences in language proficiency and multilingualism that

affects academic performance. In their study, high level of proficiency skills in speaking English is evident (60).

Lastly, the high level of pronunciation in speaking English is revealed in this study. There are numbers of studies that talk about factors affecting English pronunciation. One of the reasons that affect pronunciation is the norms in every country which determines that different country could have different pronunciations as well. The contrastive study of Feng Li in 2016 between Chinese L1 and English L2 among teachers revealed its significant difference (90). The study also testifies that being qualified for English pronunciation instruction requires not only being able to speak English correctly, fluently and natively, but also being able to build up or categorize the knowledge of difficulties in the English pronunciation. Thus, learning proper pronunciation facilitates learning any other disciplines (98).

### **Significance of Relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement**

The test of the relationship between variables revealed that there was a strong and positive significant relationship between social literacy and engagement among college students taking up education. This implied that any adjustment on the level of social literacy has a corresponding effect on the level of student engagement. Furthermore, the increase and decrease of the independent variable (IV) will also significantly increase or decrease the dependent variable (DV) or vice versa.

The context of relationship between social literacy and student engagement is aligned with the findings of the study done by Willms in 2003. He confirmed that the moderately strong school-level correlations among the engagement measures and literacy performance suggest that schools have high level of engagements which corresponds to high level of academic performance. Thus, the finding does not only predict but proves that literacy skills and student engagement has interrelationship with one another (29).

This claim is congruent to the study of Hurst, Wallace and Nixon in 2013. It states that in order for a student to be responsible, he has to know how to read, write, speak, listen and think in the classroom through active engagement in social interaction (376). Furthermore, they defined social interaction as a purposeful discourse among learners. Thus, according to them, socially interactive learners are engaged learners. Social interaction is vital to learning because according to Routman in 2005, students learn more when they are able to talk to one another and be actively involved.

### **Significant Relationship between English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement**

The test of relationship between variables revealed that there was a mediating and positive significant relationship between English speaking skills and engagement among college students in the context of colleges and universities in Davao Oriental. This implied that any adjustment on the level of English speaking skills has a corresponding effect on the level of student engagement. Furthermore, the increase and decrease of the mediating variable (MV) will also significantly increase or decrease the dependent variable (DV) or vice versa.

In this study, the results of the significant relationship between English speaking skills and student engagement were aligned to the findings of the study of Rahmat, Salija and Muliati in 2018. It states that student engagement is generally understood to be the main reason that enables motivational processes to give meaning to the learning and development. Engaged students do tasks such as participating in class, oral and speaking classes. Furthermore, these actions represent student's engagement inside the classroom (2).

On the other hand, the study of Bagheri and Mohamadi Zenouzagh (2017) has indicated only limited engagement associated on the students involvement including "talking". In fact, their study found out that student engagement was associated with avoiding the use of L1 which focused on discourse rather than pause and silence (1).

### **Significant Relationship between Student Engagement and English Speaking Skills**

The test of relationship between variables revealed that there was a mediating and positive significant relationship between Social Literacy and English speaking skills among college students taking up education in the context of colleges and universities in Davao Oriental. This implied that any adjustment on the level of Social Literacy has a corresponding effect on the level of English speaking skills. Furthermore, the increase and decrease of the mediating variable (MV) will also significantly increase or decrease the independent variable (IV) or vice versa.

The result of this study is parallel to the study of Alsubaie in 2022 about distance learning due to CoViD-19 pandemic and its impact to students' learning. It was stated that flexible learning opportunities such as online distance learning is equivalent to face-to-face modality. It suggests that when a teacher knows how to utilize distance learning effectively, learners' social literacy can be improved. Thus, this includes the digital literacy skill that is significant in learning the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which educational institutions must have (6).

Relatively, the study of Puspitasari, Nofianto and Huda in 2021 revealed that their teaching strategy on how *survival-speaking teacher* provided the students an essential learning through the integration of both synchronous and asynchronous classes. Moreover, it states that when a student is timid, it affects his/her learning. Thus, the teacher applies the method of teaching to motivate student to practice speaking. That way, students gain positive impact in their speaking skills (45-46).

### **Mediating Analysis of the Three Variables**

The test of the mediating role revealed that it was significant but partial. Data were analyzed with the linear regression method as input to medgraph. It was indicated that the paths a (social literacy as the independent variable and English speaking skills as the mediating variable), b (English speaking skills as the mediating variable and student engagement as the dependent variable), and c (social literacy as the independent variable and student engagement as the dependent variable) were all significant. Thus the original role of English speaking skills had a direct effect on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement.

The result of this study was supported by Rijnhart, et al. in 2021 which states that mediation analysis is an important statistical method in research as it can be used to

determine effective intervention components. According to them, traditional mediation analysis defines direct and indirect effects in terms of linear regression coefficients (1). In 2001, MacKinnon explained and identified the causal process that is fundamental in the relationship between two variables. It says that a mediating variable (MV) is called intermediate because it comes in between the two variables. One important aspect of mediating variable is its close relationship with the theory and other mediating variables (MacKinnon 9503-9504).

The theoretical framework of this study was entirely anchored and supported by the result of the relationship between social literacy, student engagement and English speaking skills. The theory on student involvement developed in 1984 links the relationship between English speaking skill. According to Astin in 2014, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students (518). Frymier and Houser proposed that oral participation in class plays a vital role in the student engagement because teachers typically prefer students who orally participate in their classes (3).

In Western countries, educators view oral participation as means of engagement in class (8). As a result of their study, it was found out that engaging in oral participation makes the students feel like they are learning more (16). Moreover, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's sociocultural theory links the relationship between social literacy and student engagement. As cited by Saul McLeod, Sociocultural theory views human development as a socially-mediated process in which children or students acquire their values, beliefs and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of the society (2). Furthermore, Vygotsky stresses that through interaction within the society; intellectual abilities are more developed effectively and eventually become higher mental functions (3).

Lastly, Vygotsky also stressed on the theory on Social Constructivism which functioned as the linking theory in the relationship between English speaking skills and social literacy. Mielonen & Paterson articulated that Vygotsky believed that language is developed through the interaction of the learner in a certain society and that the language is developed and built on each other (17). Once the learner learns the language, this becomes a knowledge that would eventually become literacy (18). In a research report commissioned by the Cambridge Assessment, a proposition about speaking and how it impacts literacy has been articulated that according to the National Literacy Trust, literacy is an integration of skills by definition such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Thus, a literate person is the one who communicates with others effectively and to understand written information (8).

## **Conclusion**

The data obtained for this study was analyzed and found to be adequate to support the following conclusions. The level of social literacy and student engagement are high. This means that the social literacy and student engagement is observed in many occasions by the college students taking up Education courses in the context of

colleges and universities in Davao Oriental. Likewise, the level of English speaking skills as the mediator is high which also means that English speaking skills is observed among the Education students in many occasions.

Moreover, there is a significant relationship between social literacy and student engagement among the college students taking up Education courses. Also, social literacy has a significant relationship between English speaking skills and student engagement. Finally, there is a positive relationship between English speaking skills and student engagement. This signifies that English speaking skills is correlated with student engagement.

Lastly, the mediating role of English speaking skills on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement among the college students taking up Education courses is significant but partial. It implies that part of the independent variable was mediated by the mediator but the other parts were either directed or mediated by other variables that were not included in the model. The result of this study is supported by the theory of Social Constructivism by Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky in 1978 (Mielonin & Paterson 17). As it deeply affirms that once the student learns the language, it becomes knowledge. Therefore, it leads to engagement (18).

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are formulated for consideration. The level of social literacy must be increased because its increase has a corresponding increase on the engagement of students. It is recommended that the administrators of tertiary institutions may continue to have regular review, evaluation and implementation of the existing institutional curriculum. It is really vital for an institution to evaluate and assess the students entering college especially those taking up Education courses.

The level of English speaking skills must also be increased because the results show that its increase has a corresponding increase on the social literacy and engagement of students. The researcher recommends the curricularists of tertiary education, the administration of tertiary institutions, and facilitators not just in Davao Oriental but around the Philippines to include the strengthening of English language as medium of instruction and communication in English related subjects inside and outside the classroom. Strategies may include seminars, workshops and activities that helps college students rehearse and master the speaking of English language. This will positively promote the confidence of college students in speaking in English, hence their confidence that leads them to be literate, will drive them to be academically engaged.

The formation of students in their four-five year stay in college is critical. The administration as well as instructors, professors and facilitators must work together in forming these future professionals. For instance, the policy such as "English only policy" which technically means that the teacher or instructor requires students to speak only the English language inside the classroom is one way of encouraging students to practice their English speaking skills. Or else, they cannot interact with their classmates. It is important that students, when participating in classroom activities, express their thoughts and ideas well. Some students express thoughts and ideas through the use of

the language they are comfortable using such as *tagalog (Filipino language)* or *Bisaya/Mandaya (first language in Davao Oriental)*.

However, as classroom facilitators, encouragement plays a great role in students' learning. This includes motivating the students to speak in the English language when doing oral recitations, reporting, role playing and other school-related or classroom activities which involves speaking such as different literary presentations. It is vital as well to promote student learning through encouraging them to join literary competitions.

Lastly, it is recommended for the administrators to intensify on requiring the students who will take up Education courses an *entrance interviews* upon entry to the college/university in addition to the entrance examination, *yearly interviews* to assess their knowledge and mastery and *exit interviews* in addition to mock board examination. This way, students will be encouraged to prepare and master their English speaking skills as early as high school where they are preparing to enter college. Education courses are not simple. From these courses, we are taking educators of the future generation. Hence, this policy does not close doors for students entering college who will take up Education courses who may not possess great English speaking skills but this policy will condition them on the necessary requirements and the standards that the Education system adheres for the global future teachers.

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