ABSTRACT

In several casual conversations with Filipino teachers in professional trainings in the south-central area of Maryland, many have shared that they are not exempt from communication difficulties in speaking the English Language, such as inhibitions. Admittedly, on many occasions, they have lofty ideas to share during group activities and interactions. Still, something stunts their tongue, and they keep the ideas to themselves or share them with fellow Filipino teachers. This study determined the level of English Language speaking inhibitions as well as the coping strategies of Filipino Teachers in South Central Maryland. It determined the relationship between and among the teachers’ profiles, their level of inhibition, and their use of coping strategies. Mixed methods research design was used involving 136 teachers in South Central Maryland. The study revealed that the respondents had a low level of inhibitions in items under Cognitive, Affective, and Peer-related factors except for the mastery of grammar, where a moderate level of inhibition existed. In the interview, the respondents revealed that there are factors that surround the English language speaking inhibitions: the preparation and experiences, the overall personality of the teacher, and the level of support in the workplace. In terms of coping strategies, the respondents use multimedia resources as well as peer-enhanced activities.
KEYWORDS

Inhibitions, cognitive factors, affective factors, peer-related factors, coping strategies, mixed method, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Filipino teachers are known for hard work, dedication, and commitment to so many. This is on top of their superior academic competence, well-grounded values, and high moral beliefs. It is not surprising that the Philippines has been documented as a primary source of teachers (Books & de Villiers, 2014). The American Federation of Teachers (2009) reported that the trend of teacher migration to the U.S. quietly emerged in the late 1990s. However, it was the year 2002 that marked the start of a significant global teacher labor market in the U.S. Modesto (2020) reported that public school districts sought teachers from the Philippines to fill in teacher shortages and to employ highly qualified teachers, which it defines as a teacher with subject matter expertise. In 2005, there was an influx of Filipino teachers on the East Coast, including in Maryland. Among the areas in the state, South Central Maryland was one where the greatest number of Filipino teachers – more than 1,000 since 2005 were employed.

The American Federation of Teachers did an in-depth study of international teacher recruitment’s causes and consequences, focusing specifically on teachers recruited from the Philippines. One of the featured items under the sub-topic “Dangers” said Communication Barriers. It stated, “Among the issues commonly raised by students of overseas-trained teachers and their parents are concern over the teachers’ accents. Students tend to get distracted and confused by unfamiliar accents, which can impede teaching and learning. English proficiency is generally a prerequisite for hiring. The assistance should be available to any overseas-trained teacher struggling with communications challenges.”

English is undeniably a popular global language (Arcilla et al., 2017). Keeping in view the privileged role of English across the globe, language researchers cannot afford to disassociate themselves from investigating certain issues concerning the language. Most of these issues are associated with the factors that result in better fluency in English speaking, leading to better performance in the language, particularly when it comes to the questioning of learning English as a foreign language. One factor that has been underlined to influence the performance of language learners, which in turn affects language learning and use, is anxiety to speak English (Limbago et al., 2019; Koka, Islam, and Osman, 2019).

Researchers have advanced studies on this facet and published an umbrella term that encompasses communication difficulties. Communication, Apprehension, Inhibition, and Avoidance (CAIA). It is defined as the set of interrelated constructs that link communication difficulties, especially interaction inhibition, behavioral disruption,
and communicative avoidance, to one of three factors: counterproductive thinking, conditioned response, and incompetence. According to Ur (1996), one of the four main problems in speaking a foreign language in the classroom is Inhibition. Unlike reading, writing, and listening, speaking skills need real-time exposure to the audience. When a speaker tries to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, they are often inhibited. Such as, they are worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, and shy of the attention that their speech will attract. Inhibition in English speaking performance has become a huge concern and debated issue. It has received attention and extensive research among language teachers, linguists, and researchers such as Abedini and Chalak (2017).

Their research proved that the most influential factor contributing to inhibition in speaking was negative evaluation, followed by anxiety and confidence, linguistic and topical knowledge, classroom environment, and instruction quality. Their study listed three strategies to reduce inhibition in speaking: creating an anxiety-free and friendly environment, using popular topics for speaking, and using positive feedback. Their study proved that psychological factors are among the most influential factors contributing to inhibition in speaking. Abedini and Chalak’s research paved the way for a more extensive study on inhibition in speaking the English language. Tuyen and Loan (2020) further broke down the inhibitions into three components: Language Knowledge, Affective Factors, and Peer Related Factors. The authors included the Coping Strategies of the speakers. The authors emphasized that the first factor connects with language knowledge that has something to do with grammatical rules, adequate vocabulary, and correct pronunciation of words.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to identify Filipino teachers’ English Language speaking inhibitions and coping strategies, which served as a basis for an intervention.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

This study used mixed methods research design to determine the respondents’ level of English Language speaking inhibitions and their coping strategies. Several researchers in different disciplines have concurred that mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study of this nature. Specifically, this study employed the sequential explanatory design to validate the quantitative results with qualitative data further. In this study, qualitative data were drawn from the interview. The responses in the interview were used as subsequent interpretation and clarification of the results from the quantitative data analysis. Initially, the researcher conducted the survey to gather significant quantitative data that were statistically treated. The qualitative aspect of this
study gathered additional information that clarified the teacher’s responses to the survey through interview questions. The responses were analyzed thematically.

The analysis provided a clearer and broader perspective on the level of inhibitions in speaking the English Language and the coping strategies the respondents used.

**Research Locale and Respondents**

This study was conducted in South Central Maryland from February 2022 to April 2022. It involved Filipino teachers who resided in the area and were employed in the biggest school district in the area during the school year 2021 – 2022.

**Research Instrument**

The study used survey instruments for collecting data. The questionnaire was designed to survey the teacher-participants. It had two parts; part one asked about the teachers’ profile, and part two consisted of 24 items containing the survey questionnaire gauging teachers’ inhibitions in speaking the English language in their classroom and their coping strategies. The questionnaire was adapted from Tuyen and Loan (2020). All of the questionnaire items were specially designed according to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-Never true, 2- Rarely true, 3- Sometimes true, 4-Often true, and 5-Always true. There was also an interview to further validate the responses of the teachers. An intervention plan to further address the inhibitions was designed as a result of the survey. It had to be validated using Cronbach’s alpha with its descriptive value to determine the instrument’s reliability.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

After the approval of the study by the members of the panel, the researcher communicated with the teachers regarding its purpose and significance, from the gathered data, the researcher formulated language intervention activities to mitigate or counteract the inhibitions in speaking the English Language.

**Statistical Treatment**

Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency count, and percentage distribution were utilized in describing the respondents’ profiles. Mean was used to describe the respondents’ extent of speaking inhibition in using the English Language and coping strategies with their speaking inhibitions. Thematic analysis was used to describe other strategies identified by the respondents to cope with their speaking inhibitions in using the English Language. Inferential statistics such as the Chi-square test for association and Spearman rank correlation were used to test the relationship between respondents’ extent of speaking inhibitions in using the English Language and their profile variables. The same statistical tests were used in testing the relationship between respondents’ coping strategies and their profile variables. The strength of correlation was construed
based on the guideline suggested by Dancey and Reidy (2004), namely: ≥±0.70: Very Strong Relationship, ±0.40 - ±0.69: Strong Relationship, ±0.30 - ±0.39: Moderate Relationship, ±0.20 - ±0.29: Weak Relationship, and ±0.01 - ±0.19: Negligible Relationship.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The overall mean (\(\bar{x}=1.95\)) indicates a “low” level of inhibition in English language speaking inhibitions regarding language knowledge/cognitive, affective, and peer-related factors. This supports the findings in the study of Modesto (2020) about the insights into Filipino teachers’ perceived opportunities, challenges, and triumphs. The study emphasized that Filipino teachers have chosen to stay, do the job of teaching, and remain committed to it. The low inhibition of teachers in speaking the English language is a further justification for the fact related to why the Philippines has been documented as a primary source of teachers (Books & de Villiers, 2014). This also proves the claim that Filipino teachers were employed in a South-Central Maryland school district because they met English proficiency as a general pre-requisite for hiring (AFT, 2009).

In terms of the items for coping strategies, all revealed “High,” which means that the respondents use coping strategies to address their inhibitions.

Two items gain the highest means: I keep speaking the English language (\(\bar{x}=3.99\)) and actively participate in group or pair work in professional development sessions (\(\bar{x}=3.99\)). This is consistent with the claim of McCroskey and Sheahan (1976), stating that such apprehension generally takes the form of approach or avoidance or inhibitive behaviors across a variety of communication situations. That is, persons low in communication apprehension actively engage in behaviors designed to increase the potential for interaction. In contrast, high communication apprehensiveness actively avoids oral communication encounters by engaging in behaviors that minimize potential interactions. In this study, the respondents maintain the approach of using a low level of inhibition to engage in opportunities that increase interaction actively. The interview revealed the factors that surround the English language speaking inhibitions of the teachers: Filipino teachers have a repertoire of coping strategies when faced with communication challenges such as speaking inhibitions; the value of observation and practice; read and practice- depth of meaning.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn: English language speaking inhibitions of teachers do exist, but there are mitigating and coping strategies such as reading, observation, practice, use of technology and focusing on depth of meaning and grammar intervention activities that can be utilized; With the set of coping strategies to counteract English language speaking inhibitions at hand and
with the high number of years of experience and length of training, the Filipino teachers in South Central, Maryland proved to be aware of issues and solutions that surround their job such as this communication inhibition, but they strive to sustain the challenge of excellence in a foreign classroom.

This study further implies that with the low level of English Language speaking inhibitions, the Filipino teachers manifest a level of confidence in using the English Language; It remains that the Filipino teachers in South Central, Maryland can orchestrate coping strategies that will allow them to be successful communicators in the classrooms. They have used strategies to counteract and mitigate the impact of these inhibitions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended: The researcher may work with the school districts and US-based/Maryland-based Filipino organizations to offer and implement the proposed intervention activities. Given the nature of the English language speaking inhibitions and the coping strategies, the researcher may connect with US/Maryland-based teacher organizations to incorporate the results of this study as a basis for a New Teacher Induction Program in the US/Maryland. Also, the researcher should share the results of this study with the American Federation of Teachers to shed light on any existing issues that confront Filipino teachers or other foreign teachers who enter the US as second language speakers of English. Policymakers such as the Philippine Consular Offices through the Department of Foreign Affairs and its education services office may use this study as a basis for crafting programs designed to prepare teachers and other overseas employees before departure. School administrators in the US may use the result of this study to design further support and interventions for teachers experiencing a more serious level of English language speaking inhibitions. The intervention program developed by the researcher may be adopted and implemented to enhance the English-Speaking Skills of the teachers better. Future researchers may conduct a comparative study about Filipino Teachers in a country where English may not be the dominant language to prove the consistency of the results.

**LITERATURE CITED**


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