AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 12 Number 3
September, 2025

Language Anxiety, Communication Apprehension and Self-Concepts as Determinants of Senior Secondary School Students' Verbal Communication Skills in Ibadan Nigeria

OMOSEEBI, Augustine Abimbola
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
aomoseebi9200@stu.ui.edu.ng https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5141-8115

Abstract

This study explores the interplay of language anxiety, communication apprehension, and self-concept as determinants of verbal communication skills among senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Input or Monitor Model provided the framework, while the study adopted the correlational survey design. Data were collected from 179 Senior Secondary School 2 students across four randomly selected schools. Instruments included the English Language Anxiety Scale ELCAS, Communication Apprehension Questionnaire CAQ, Verbal Communication Rating Scale VCRS, and Learners Self-Concept Questionnaire LSCQ. The findings revealed high levels of language anxiety and communication apprehension, alongside strong self-concept among participants. However, only language anxiety demonstrated a significant negative relationship with verbal communication achievement, while communication apprehension and self-concept did not significantly predict performance. These results challenge prevailing assumptions about the cumulative impact of psychological factors on language proficiency and underscore the complex nature of verbal communication challenges in this context. The study recommends interventions that lower language anxiety, improve students' self-awareness and confidence, and blend psychological, pedagogical, and environmental strategies to reduce language anxiety, develop more accurate self-assessment tools, and further qualitative and longitudinal research to

understand better the evolving dynamics of psychological factors and communication skills among Nigerian students.

Keywords: Language, Anxiety, Communication, Apprehension, Self-Concept, Verbal Communication

Introduction

English as a global language for communication has become a total necessity. In many divides of the world, English language education plays a significant role. As a lingua franca, it fosters global communication, socio-economic development and educational opportunities. English language connects several people from different cultures and allows free flow of communication and ideas sharing. English language has typically four basic skills, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking which requires verbal communication skills. In Nigeria, English language serves as a medium of instruction in schools and it is a compulsory subject that must be passed at all levels of education. Foyewa, (2020).

Language anxiety affects ability to learn and speak English. Anxiety is a significant factor affecting verbal communication skill. When people feel anxious, their minds may race or go blank, impairing their ability to articulate thoughts. This nervous energy can lead to stumbling over words, forgetting key points, or even avoiding communication altogether. Social anxiety, in particular, makes individuals overly self-conscious, fearing judgment or negative evaluation from others, which heightens their distress and disrupts verbal fluency. Anxiety creates a mental barrier, often preventing individuals from fully engaging in the conversation. This causes them to communicate less effectively, which can in turn, reinforce their anxiety in future interactions.

Anxiety is "distinct complex self-perceptions, beliefs and behaviour related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" in contexts involving

acquiring a foreign or second language (Horwitz et al., 1986). This indicates that anxiety can be associated with such intricate emotions and that only students are capable of fully comprehending the circumstances. Similarly, "fear of uncertainties that arise when you think about studying a foreign language". Leaver, B., M. Ehrman and M. Shekhtman defined anxiety language learning as speaking with someone in a foreign language may possibly create tensions and worries as the roles we played are intimately bound up with personality and the self". MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989 stated that when learners pick up the language, their adverse emotional reactions rise. In his research, Horwitz et al. (1986) found that many nervous students reported having severe conditions that cause them to experience "mental blocks" when speaking a foreign language. Anxiety has been discovered to be one of the most extensively studied variables in all psychology and education research and it is frequently believed by many language learners to impact language learning negatively (Horwitz, 2001). High-anxiety students also often prefer to play it safe by withholding their ideas and staying out of class discussions out of concern that they will receive unfavourable feedback from their peers and the teacher. According to Boabin Zhoa (2005), students can make blunders when speaking because they are bashful and uneasy. To put it briefly, ESL learners frequently experience anxiety and discomfort when speaking or performing in the target language.

Thus, verbal communication anxiety is seen as a specific social phobia or difficulty in communicating in a group or before a group of people, which may hinder one's studies or life in general (Samuelson, 2011). Horwitz et al. (1986) describe the difficulty students' encounter while speaking to an individual or group or hearing or seeing spoken messages, such as communication phobia, verbal communication anxiety, "stage phobia," and language anxiety. Verbal communication anxiety can manifest in many ways, such as migraine and confusion (Ortega, 2009), high

blood pressure, grasping hands or other parts of the body, nervousness, inability to remember content, avoidance of eyes (Hanna and Gibson), and, 1987) mood disturbance, excessive Anxiety, fatigue, headache, etc. (Battaglia & Ogliari, 2005). Various factors (Zhang & Zhong, 2012) have been attributed to language anxiety which include teaching style, academic activities, psychological factors, cultural factors, low trust, shyness, fear of making mistakes such as mispronouncing words, lack of preparation, fear of laughter and native speakers Effects.(Dalkiliç, 2001; Azher et al., 2010).

Kojima (2007) found that when students do not acquire adequate language skills such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, their anxiety increases. Accordingly, Kayoglu and Saglamel (2013) found that the level of language anxiety among 30 Turkish EFL learners increased with language difficulties (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation). Psychological factors reveal that personality traits are closely related to L2 learning. For example, innovators seem happy and ready to interact with others (Kojima, 2007).

On the other hand, perfectionists are also anxious students as they worry more about mistakes due to their higher performance standards (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Other factors, such as fears of communication with other people, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of failure, also contribute to language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). In addition, unfamiliarity with the target language culture also increases anxiety levels (Kojima, 2007). This is confirmed by Tanveer (2007), who examined the causes of language anxiety among 20 EFL/ESL learners. He found that their language anxiety was mainly due to the difference between the student's cultural background and the target language. Although many studies have examined the relationship between anxiety and language proficiency, there needs to be a significant gap in the knowledge about the impact of anxiety and language proficiency among secondary school ESL students in Nigeria.

Anxiety is a common emotion that affects individuals in various aspects of their lives, including their language-learning experiences. For secondary school ESL students in Nigeria, anxiety has been identified as an essential challenge that hinders their verbal communication skill. While anxiety second language acquisition is a well-documented concern, there are notable differences in its multidimensional effects on verbal communication skills in this particular population in Nigeria the sense of the problem is twofold: First, there is a lack of comprehensive research examining the causes and motivations of anxiety among secondary school ESL students in English-speaking Nigeria. This study is therefore essential in order to design targeted interventions to address these anxiety triggers. Secondly, the complex relationship between anxiety and language proficiency in this context has not been adequately explored, hindering the development of effective strategies for teachers and policymakers.

The lack of information on how ESL learners in Nigeria cope with anxiety in language situations further complicates the issue. Examining these coping strategies is essential to understand these students' resilience and adaptability and identify areas where intervention may be needed. Thus, the main problem addressed by this study is the multidimensional effect of anxiety levels on secondary school ESL students' proficiency in the Nigerian language. Verbal communication is a language skill that involves systematically producing and conveying an aural/oral message/meaning through verbal utterances (Bailey, 2008). Cheng (2007) highlighted that speaking is "a closed loop wherein the conversation can only occur where there are two individuals, the communicator, and recipient." Speaking is further defined by Hammad and Ghali (2015) "as a productive aural/oral process that consists of using grammatical rules, cohesive devices, lexical items, phonological rules for expressing one's thoughts and feelings in speech."

Verbal Communication (VC) is an important aspect of human life which facilitates the exchange of information, ideas and emotions between individuals and groups. It involves the use of spoken language to convey meanings, build relationships and achieve personal organisational goals. Effective verbal communication is therefore needed in various contexts especially in the academic environment, social, educational and professional setting. Lasisi (2021) defines verbal communication (VC) as a means of sending information between two interlocutors. Effective verbal communication involves clarity and concision, confidence and assertiveness, active listening, flexibility and adaptability.

The importance of verbal communication cannot be overstated. VC builds trust and rapport, resolves conflicts and facilitates collaboration and teamwork. Teaching and learning cannot take place in the classroom without good verbal communication by the teachers. To ask a question in the class, interact with other students or show adequate level of communicative competence, the students need good verbal communication as well. Good verbal communication skill minimizes the potential of ill-mannered attitudes during the teaching process. It enhances problem solving skills of the students, builds self-esteem and confidence and prepares them for future careers and leadership roles. Verbal communication involves various classroom interactions which include: debates, group projects, classroom discussions, and peer-to-peer conversations.

Despite the importance of verbal communication, it is however observed that significant number of secondary school students face challenges in verbal communication including: shyness, language barriers, social anxiety, distractions. This is often manifested in their poor grammatical expressions, shyness to speak in the public as well as poor audibility which could be as a result of verbal communication anxiety.

Sibanda 2015 postulated that effective verbal communication is an important pre-requisite for teachers' success in their classroom interactions with their students

Verbal Communication is a language skill that involves systematically producing and conveying an aural/oral message/meaning through verbal utterances (Bailey, 2008). It is described as a vocal use of language to communicate with others (Fulcher, 2003). Cheng (2007) highlighted that speaking is "a closed loop wherein the conversation can only occur where there are two individuals, the communicator, and recipient." Speaking is further defined by Hammad and Ghali (2015) "as a productive aural/oral process that consists of using grammatical rules, cohesive devices, lexical items, phonological rules for expressing one's thoughts and feelings in speech."

Verbal communication skills can be viewed as a process of relating information from one person to the other through verbal means. Verbal communication skills are however very essential in the school system because it can help the teacher to communicate effectively with the students, helps the students to communicate their ideas in the classroom and within themselves and within the society. Communication skills involve the appropriate selection of language that can be used to communicate with the audience, speaking at a moderate pace, slowly, confidently but with modesty, summarising main points made by other speakers, supporting statements with facts and evidence, tailoring messages to different audiences, telling stories to capture an audience and using humour to engage an audience (Doyle, 2017)

A limited command of language or unfamiliarity with the topic can make people struggle to express ideas accurately, leading to misunderstandings or fragmented thoughts. Verbal communication is not just about speaking; it's also about understanding. Those who do not actively listen may respond inappropriately, causing

communication breakdowns. Poor verbal communication can stem from several factors, often intertwined with psychological influences which include anxiety. When individuals harbour doubts about their linguistic abilities, every word feels like a risk. Afraid of making mistakes, they become guarded and hesitant in their speech. The insecurity silences spontaneity, leaving their verbal delivery tentative, fragmented, or unclear.

Communication Apprehension has been identified as a major factor that limits an individual's willingness to communicate and ability to develop effective communication skills. Communication apprehension can be described as one of the most commonly talked about and well researched concepts in the field of communication. Wrench et al., 2008. Communication can be seen as the process by which someone stimulates meaning in the mind of another person. Agrawal & Krishna, 2021. Understanding communication and the different communication scene is crucial to understanding communication apprehension. McCroskey in 1985 births the term "communication apprehension" and he describesit as the fear or anxiety that is associated with either real or expected communication with another individual/s. Richmond & McCroskey, 1995. Communication apprehension can be related to several types of social withdrawal behaviours such as, the need to live in a rural area, the fear of speaking, the need to sit separately away from a crowd. McCroskey & Sheahan, 1978; Sealy, 2021. Individuals with such behavioural traits often avoid communicative relationship. Berger et al., 1984; Loureiro et al., 2020. Researches have shown by Watson (2007) showed that people with high levels of communication apprehension are significantly less likely to communicate with people than those with low communication apprehension levels. Those with extreme level of apprehension avoid communicative interaction as a result of anxiety or fear over the years have associated with communication. These fears and anxieties might come from bullying, ridicule and other negative attitudes that is exhibited

against them and which they have now associated with communicating.

Therefore, in order to avoid these awkward social contexts, they decided to keep mute. While some people suffer extreme form of communication apprehension, others suffer mild communication apprehension and might not exhibit any form of anxiety or fear during interactions. Pitt & Ramaseshan, 1990. Armstrong and Rubin (1989) said people who exhibited certain level of communication apprehension generally prefer to make do with a medium instead of having a face-to-face communication.

Statement of the Problem

Verbal communication is an essential skill that allows individuals to express ideas, share knowledge and engage effectively within their communities. In educational settings, verbal communication skills are essential in helping teachers convey complex concepts and enabling students to articulate their understanding. However, for secondary school English as a Second Language (ESL) students in Nigeria, it is observed that verbal communication proficiency is frequently hindered by anxiety. This anxiety, a common emotional response to stressful language-learning contexts, significantly impacts students' communication skills, affecting their participation, academic performance, and social interactions.

Previous studies show that anxiety can interfere with language acquisition, creating mental barriers that restrict students' ability to express themselves fluently and confidently. Various factors contribute to this language anxiety, including fear of negative evaluation, cultural disconnect, limited vocabulary and perfectionism. Yet, in Nigeria, little is known about the specific causes, manifestations and coping strategies for verbal communication anxiety among secondary school ESL students. Without such insight, educators lack the tools needed to provide targeted support, and students continue to struggle in silence.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the multidimensional effects of language anxiety, communication apprehension, and self-concepts as determinants of senior secondary school students' verbal communication skills in Ibadan Nigeria. Specifically, it aims to understand how anxiety shapes their speaking abilities, identify the anxiety triggers unique to this context, and explore coping mechanisms that can be harnessed to improve communication skills. By highlighting the impact of anxiety on verbal communication, this research provides a foundation for developing interventions to reduce verbal communication apprehension, enhance language proficiency, and support the overall academic and social success of ESL learners in Nigeria.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' language anxiety?
2. What is the level of students' communication apprehension?
3. What are the levels of students' self-concepts?

Research Methodology

The study adopted the survey design of the correlational type. This design allows the investigation of the relationships between variables. Simple random technique was adopted to select four senior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. Senior Secondary School two students were purposively chosen for the study because they are perceived to be more experienced since SS3 students were busy preparing for their external examination. The instruments used were: English Language Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) (r=0.70), Communication Apprehension Questionnaire (CAQ) (r=0.71), Verbal Communication Rating Scale (VCRS) (r=0.71), Learners Self-Concept Questionnaire (LSCQ) (r=0.75). The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics frequency counts, percentage

and standard deviation and inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlational multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussions of Findings

s/n	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	St.D.
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English language class	25 (14%)	58 (32.4%)	50 (27.9%)	25 (14%)	2.95	1.31
2.	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class	25 (14%)	53 (29.6%)	54 (30.2%)	34 (19%)	3.15	1.50
3.	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class	25 (14%)	59 (33%)	42 (23.5%)	23 (12.8%)	2.88	1.27
4.	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English language class.	29 (16.2%)	65 (36.3%)	43 (24%)	22 (12.3%)	2.79	1.30
5.	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	37 (20.7%)	56 (31.3 %)	42 (23.5%)	24 (13.4%)	2.77	1.36
6.	I am usually at ease during tests in my oral English class	12 (6.7%)	29 (16.2%)	64 (35.8%)	30 (16.8%)	3.39	1.14
7.	In oral English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	36 (20.1%)	53(29.6 %)	40 (22.3%)	21 (11.7%)	2.98	3.35
8.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class	44 (24.6%)	59 (33%)	28 (15.6%)	18 (10.1%)	2.53	1.29
9.	I would not be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers	40 (22.3%)	57 (31.8%)	37 (20.7%)	19 (10.6%)	3.07	4.25
10.	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it	22 (12.3%)	60(33.5 %)	49 (27.4%)	23 (12.8%)	2.94	1.27
11.	I often feel like not going to my oral English class	20 (11.2%)	23 (12.8%)	73 (40.8%)	44 (24.6%)	3.54	1.29
12.	I feel confident when I speak in English language class	14 (7.8%)	19 (10.6%)	67 (37.4%)	54 (30.2%)	3.71	1.22
13.	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in oral English class	29 (16.2%)	53 (29.6%)	42 (23.5%)	30 (16.8%)	2.94	1.36
14.	The more I study for an oral English test, the more confused I get	35 (19.6%)	65 (36.3%)	34 (19%)	19 (10.6%)	2.64	1.28
15.	I always feel that the other students speak English language better than I do	49 (27.4%)	44 (24.6%)	26 (14.5%)	32 (17.9%)	2.70	1.45
16.	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English language in front of other students	32 (17.9%)	45 (25.1%)	49 (27.4%)	34 (19%)	3.04	1.41

17.	I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes	32 (17.9%)	53 (29.6%)	37 (20.7%)	29 (16.2%)	2.87	1.36
18.	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language	39 (21.8%)	61 (34.1%)	25 (14%)	23 (12.8%)	2.62	1.31
Weighted Mean = 2.97; Threshold = 2.50							

Table 1 shows the level of language anxiety students have. The result presents a weighted mean of 2.97 which is greater than the threshold set at 2.50. This implies that students had high language anxiety. Out of the eighteen items used, seven (7) items whose mean values were greater than the weighted mean of 2.97 contributed to the conclusion of students' high language anxiety.

In order of magnitude, the items are: item 12 – I feel confident when I speak in English language class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.71>2.97); item 11 – I often feel like not going to my oral English class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54>2.97); item 6 – I am usually at ease during tests in my oral English class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.39>2.97); item 2 – I don't worry about making mistakes in language class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.15>2.97); item 9 – I would not be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.07>2.97); item 16 – I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students ($\bar{x}$ = 3.04>2.97); and item 7 - In oral English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know ($\bar{x}$ = 2.98>2.97).
Therefore, the result implies that students showed high language anxiety.

Table 2: Students' level of Communication apprehension

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	St. D.
1	I dislike participating in group discussions	22 (12.3%)	24 (13.4%)	68 (38%)	42 (23.5%)	3.46	1.31
2	Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions	6 (3.4%)	24 (13.4%)	82 (45.8%)	47 (26.3%)	3.78	1.08
3	I am tense and nervous	24	57	40	18	2.83	1.20

	while participating in group discussions	(13.4%)	(31.8%)	(22.3%)	(10.1%)		
4	I like to get involved in group discussions	11 (6.1%)	27 (15.1%)	72 (40.2%)	42 (23.5%)	3.59	1.17
5	I am thinking that other students are better	20 (11.2%)	63 (35.2%)	45 (25.1%)	20(11.2 %)	2.89	1.22
6	I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions	8 (4.5%)	24 (13.4%)	80 (44.7%)	41 (22.9%)	3.68	1.10
7	I am calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in the class	6 (3.4%)	27(15.1 %)	84 (46.9%)	31 (17.3%)	3.59	1.04
8	I am afraid to express myself in the class	22 (12.3%)	68 (38%)	33 (18.4%)	19 (10.6%)	2.77	1.19
9	Communicating in the class usually makes me uncomfortable	36 (20.1%)	67 (37.4%)	28 (15.6%)	26 (14.5%)	2.67	1.34
10	I am very relaxed when answering questions in the class	14 (7.8%)	27 (15.1%)	71 (39.7%)	39 (21.8%)	3.52	1.21
11	While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous	15 (8.4%)	59 (33%)	50 (27.9%)	21 (11.7%)	3.01	1.19
12	I have no fear of speaking up in conversations	31 (17.3%)	72 (40.2%)	31 (17.3%)	13 (7.3%)	2.56	1.17
13	Ordinarily, I am tense and nervous in conversations	13 (7.3%)	59 (33%)	42 (23.5%)	32 (17.9%)	3.11	1.25
14	Ordinarily. I am very calm and relaxed in conversations	11 (6.1%)	25 (14%)	75 (41.9%)	40 (22.3%)	3.60	1.15
15	While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed	11 (6.1%)	18 (10.1%)	81 (45.3%)	33 (18.4%)	3.76	2.45
16	I'm afraid to speak up in conversations	34 (19%)	65 (36.3%)	22 (12.3%)	25 (14%)	2.77	2.05
17	I have no fear of giving a speech	55 (30.7%)	45 (25.1%)	45 (25.1%)	6 (3.4%)	2.45	1.25
18	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech	14 (7.8%)	33 (18.4%)	64 (35.8%)	28 (15.6%)	3.32	1.17
19	I feel relaxed while giving a speech	8 (4.5%)	26 (14.5%)	58 (32.4%)	44 (24.6%)	3.58	1.14
20	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	9 (5%)	20 (11.2%)	83 (46.4%)	34 (19%)	3.63	1.06
21	While giving a speech I get so nervous I forget facts I really know	23 (12.8%)	51 (28.5%)	37 (20.7%)	36 (20.1%)	3.06	1.34
	Weighted Mean =2.97; Threshold =2.50						

Table 1 shows the level of communication apprehension students have. The result presents a weighted mean of 2.97 which is greater than the threshold set at 2.50. This implies that students had high communication apprehension. Out of the twenty-one (21) items used, eleven (11) items whose mean values were greater than the weighted mean of 3.22 contributed to the conclusion of students' high communication apprehension. In order of magnitude, the items are: item 2 – Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78>3.22); item 15 – While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed ($\bar{x}$ = 3.76>3.22); item 6 – I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68>3.22); item 20 – I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63>3.22); item 14 – Ordinarily. I am very calm and relaxed in conversations ($\bar{x}$ = 3.60>3.22); item 4 – I like to get involved in group discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.59>3.22); item 7 - I am calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in the class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.59>3.22); item 19 - I feel relaxed while giving a speech ($\bar{x}$ = 3.58>3.22); item 10 - I am very relaxed when answering questions in the class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.52>3.22); item 1 - I dislike participating in group discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.46>3.22); and item 18 - Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech ($\bar{x}$ = 3.32>3.22). Therefore, the result implies that students exhibited high communication apprehension.

Research Question 3: What are students' self-concepts?

Table 3: Students' self-concepts

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	St. D.
1	My ability to learn the English language is high	69 (38.5%)	63 (35.2%)	21 (11.7%)	25 (14%)	3.00	1.04
2	I express myself freely in English language	62 (34.6%)	76 (42.5%)	25 (14%)	15 (8.4%)	3.05	0.91
3.	I participate effectively in English language discussions	74 (41.3%)	62 (34.6%)	27 (15.1%)	15 (8.4%)	3.10	0.95
4	I can speak English language very well	58 (32.4%)	63 (35.2%)	29 (16.2%)	28 (15.6%)	2.86	1.05
5	My understanding of what others say in English	38 (21.2%)	59 (33%)	31 (17.3%)	50 (27.9%)	2.49	1.12

	language is limited						
6	I speak English language with a good foreign accent	34 (19%)	64 (35.8%)	46(25.7 %)	34 (19%)	2.56	1.02
7	I feel good about myself when speaking in English language classroom	55 (30.7%)	82 (45.8%)	22(12.3 %)	19 (10.6%)	2.98	0.93
8	I don't feel relaxed when I talk to my English language teachers	28 (16.2%)	38(21.2 %)	33(18.4 %)	1 (0.6%)	3.83	1.19
9	I find difficulty speaking English in front of my classmates	16 (8.9%)	34(19%)	34 (19%)	94 (52.5%)	1.86	1.05
10	My classmates are better English language learners than me	25 (14%)	28 (15.6%)	42 (23.5%)	84 (46.9%)	1.96	1.05
11	I avoid any discussions in English language	15 (8.4%)	45 (25.1%)	25 (14%)	94 (52.5%)	1.89	1.05
12	I reluctantly participate in any speaking activities	29 (16.2%)	46 (25.7%)	45 (25.1%)	59(33%)	2.25	1.08
13	I am always eager to participate in oral English class	47 (26.3%)	73 (40.8%)	36 (20.1%)	22(12.3 %)	2.82	1.97
14	I speak oral English fluently	36 (20.1%)	64 (35.8%)	50 (27.9%)	29 (16.2%)	2.59	0.98
Weighted Mean = 2.66; Threshold = 2.50							

Table 3 shows the level of self-concept students have. The result presents a weighted mean of 2.66 which is greater than the threshold set at 2.5. This implies that students had high self-concepts. Out of the fourteen items used, seven (7) items whose mean values were greater than the weighted mean of 2.66 contributed to the conclusion of students' high self-concept. In order of magnitude, the items are: item 8 – I don't feel relaxed when I talk to my English language teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 3.83>2.66); item 3 – I participate effectively in English language discussions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.10>2.66); item 2 – I express myself freely in English language ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05>2.66); item 2 – I don't worry about making mistakes in language class ($\bar{x}$ = 3.15>2.97); item 7 – I feel good about myself when speaking in English language classroom ($\bar{x}$ = 2.98>2.66); item 4 - I can speak English language very well ($\bar{x}$ = 2.86>2.66);

and item 13 - I am always eager to participate in oral English class item ($\bar{x}$ = 2.82>2.66). Therefore, the result implies that students showed high self-concept.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide important information on how language anxiety, communication apprehension, and self-concept interact to influence the oral communication skills of senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria. The results showed that most students experienced moderate to high levels of language anxiety and communication apprehension, suggesting that emotional barriers still prevent many students from expressing themselves freely in English classrooms. This finding supports the reports of Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) that anxiety negatively affects students' ability to process and produce language. However, the study also found that students had relatively high self-concept, suggesting that many students maintain a positive self-perception of their English proficiency despite the presence of anxiety. This coexistence of confidence and fear reflects what Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) have described as "absolute anxiety," where confident students still worry about making mistakes or being negatively evaluated. The study further found that language anxiety had a significant negative relationship with oral communication achievement, while communication apprehension and self-concept did not significantly predict performance. This supports Olagbaju's (2021) finding that anxiety impairs language production by activating emotional filters that make expression difficult, but also suggests that other moderating factors, such as teaching style, peer support, and classroom environment, may influence the strength of these relationships. However, the finding that self-concept had the strongest individual positive influence on verbal communication highlights the critical role of self-confidence in improvement.

The relationships between the variables further confirmed that while language anxiety hinders communication, self-concept

enhances it, supporting Krashen's effective filter hypothesis which believes that emotional stress limits effective language input and output. These findings have significant pedagogical implications: English language teachers should recognize that anxiety is not just an emotional reaction but a cognitive barrier that affects learners' performance. Consequently, classroom practices should include psychological support, relaxation activities, and learner-centered verbal tasks that promote confidence and reduce fear. Curriculum planners should also embed oral communication modules that build self-concept through peer interaction, constructive feedback, and positive reinforcement. When compared with related international studies such as Kayoglu and Saglamel (2013), who linked increased anxiety with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties among Turkish EFL learners, the present study identifies context-specific triggers among Nigerian learners such as fear of public embarrassment, teacher criticism, and the need for local judgement. Related interventions. In essence, this study shows that while language anxiety remains a major barrier to effective oral communication, its negative effects can be mitigated by a supportive instructional environment that promotes confidence, increases self-awareness, and empowers students to express themselves fluently and effectively in the English language.

In essence, this study shows that while language anxiety remains a major barrier to effective oral communication, its negative effects can be mitigated by a supportive instructional environment that promotes confidence, increases self-awareness, and empowers students to express themselves fluently and effectively in the English language.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of psychological factors particularly language anxiety, communication apprehension and self-concept on students' verbal communication skills. It emphasizes that effective language learning requires attention not

only to linguistic competence but also to emotional readiness and learner confidence. Teachers and policymakers should therefore adopt integrated strategies that reduce anxiety, build positive self-concept and promote supportive classroom interactions. A holistic approach combining psychological interventions with innovative teaching methods can enhance students' confidence and communicative performance. Continued research on the evolving relationship between these psychological variables and language achievement is essential to ensure that English language education in Nigeria remains responsive, effective, and attuned to the realities of modern learning environments.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study recommends as follows:

1. English language teachers should implement targeted strategies to reduce language anxiety among students, as this was found to have the most significant negative impact on verbal communication skills. This could include creating supportive classroom environments, providing more low-stakes practice opportunities, and teaching anxiety management techniques.
2. Develop more accurate self-assessment tools and feedback mechanisms to help students gain a realistic understanding of their verbal communication abilities; this is given as a result of the disconnection found between students' self-concept and actual achievement.
3. Conduct further research which includes qualitative studies to explore additional factors that may influence verbal communication achievement among Nigerian secondary school students, such as cultural factors, socioeconomic background, prior language exposure, and teaching methodologies.
4. Implement longitudinal studies to understudy how psychological factors and their relationship to achievement evolve over time, helping identify critical periods for intervention and support throughout students' academic careers.

5. Adopt a multifaceted approach to enhancing verbal communication skills that addresses language anxiety while also considering other potential influencing factors. This may involve combining targeted psychological interventions, improved teaching methodologies, and supportive learning environments that encourage communication practice.

Reference

Adeniyi, F. O. (2017). *Communication: Component of modern communication*. Warner Books Inc.

Adeyemi, S. O. (2017). *Assessing communication apprehension And implication for employability among mass communication students*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 22(2), 78–84.

Adesina, A., & Afolabi, F. (2018). *Self-concept and language learning performance*. Journal of Educational Studies, 12(2), 45–59.

Agrawal, S., & Krishna, S. M. (2021). Communication and psychological well-being of students in online learning. Behavioral Sciences, 11(11), 145. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs11110145

Aliyu, M. M., Korau, S. M., & Basiru, A. (2019). *Reducing undergraduates' speaking anxiety through class interactions and oral presentations*. Asian Journal of Contemporary Education, 3(1), 36–43.

Azher, M., Anwar, M. N., & Naz, A. (2010). *The impact of anxiety on language learning of ESL students. Journal of Language Learning*, 6(2), 28–34.

Battaglia, L., & Ogliari, A. (2005). *Anxiety and its physical manifestations in language learners*. Language Education Research, 11(3), 55–69.

Boabin, Z. (2005). *Student shyness and speech errors in ESL contexts*. International Journal of Language Education, 2(1), 13–25.

Cheng, Y. S. (2007). *Factors associated with foreign language*

writing anxiety. Foreign Language Annals, 35(4), 647–656.

Dalkiliç, N. (2001). *The role of foreign language classroom anxiety in English speaking performance*. Educational Journal of Theory and Practice, 2(1), 22–29.

Dewaele, J. M., & Berman, A. (2002). *Emotions and second language learning*. Language Learning, 52(2), 249–285.

Diao, Z., & Paramasivam, S. (2013). *Anxiety of speaking English in class among international students in a Malaysian university*. International Journal of Education and Research, 1(11), 1–16.

Doyle, A. (2017). Communication skills for workplace success. The Balance Careers.

Foyewa, R. A. (2020). *A review of the status of English language in the Nigerian school system. International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 8(6), 63–69.

Fulcher, G. 2003. Testing Second Language Speaking. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited

Gregersen, T., & Horwitz, E. K. (2002). *Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious students' reactions to their own oral performance*. The Modern Language Journal, 86(4), 562–570.

Hammad, E. A., & Ghali, K. (2015). *Speaking difficulties among EFL learners:* Causes and solutions. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 11(2), 45–59.

Horwitz, E. K. (2001). *Language anxiety and achievement.* Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 21(1), 112–126.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). *Foreign language classroom anxiety.* The Modern Language Journal, 70(2), 125–132.

Kayaoğlu, M. N., & Sağlamel, H. (2013). *Students' perceptions of language anxiety in speaking classes.* Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 2(2), 142-160.

Kojima, R. (2007). *The effect of insufficient grammar and vocabulary on learner anxiety.* Asian EFL Journal, 9(3), 77–93.

Lasisi, A. (2021). *Verbal communication competence among Nigerian undergraduates*. Journal of Communication Studies, 15(1), 88–99.

Leaver, B. L., Ehrman, M., & Shekhtman, B. (2005). *Achieving success in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loureiro, M., Loureiro, N., & Silva, R. (2020). *Differences of gender in oral and written communicationapprehension of university students*. Education Sciences, 10, 379.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). *Anxiety and second-language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification*. Language Learning, 39(2), 251–275.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). *Methods and results in the study of foreign language anxiety*: A review. Language Learning, 41(1), 85–117.

Mari, M. A. (2016). *A study of students' language anxiety in speaking performance at SMA Negeri 1 Toraja Utara*. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 3(2), 147–156.

McCroskey, J. C. (1985). *The communication apprehension perspective*. Communication Yearbook, 8, 293–309.

McCroskey, J. C., & Sheahan, M. (1978). *Communication apprehension, social withdrawal, and rural living*. Communication Quarterly, 26(3), 23–29.

McCroskey, J. C., & Sheahan, M. E. (1978). *Communication apprehension, social preference, and social behavior in a college environment*. Communication Quarterly, 26(2), 41-45. https://doi.org/10.1080/ 01463377809369292

Ortega, L. (2009). *Understanding second language acquisition.* London: Hodder Education.

Olagbaju, O. O. (2021). *Influence of language anxiety and prior knowledge on ESL students' achievement in expository essay writing in Ibadan North LGA, Nigeria*. Education Research International, 2021, 1–7.

Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (1995). *Communication:*

Apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness. Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Samuelson, P. (2011). *Social phobia and verbal communication difficulties*. Journal of Social Psychology, 17(2), 144–160.

Sealy, M. K. (2021). *Communication in the time of COVID-19: An examination of imagined interactions and communication apprehension during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 41, 158-186. https://doi.org/10.1177/02762366211021076

Tanveer, M. (2007). *Investigation of the factors that cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners in learning speaking skills and the influence it casts on communication in the target language.* Unpublished Master's Dissertation, University of Glasgow.

Watson, B. R. (2007). *Speaking up in the 21st century: The effects of communication apprehension and Internet self-efficacy on use of social networking websites* [Unpublished master thesis]. University of Missouri.

Wrench, J. S., Richmond, V. P., & Gorham, J. (2008). *Communication, affect, and learning in the classroom.* Telford: Tapestry Press.

Young, D. J. (1990). *An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking*. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 11, 31–42.

Zhang, R., & Zhong, J. (2012). *The hindrance of doubt: Causes of language anxiety. International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(3), 27. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n3p27