International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 21s, 2025
https://theaspd.com/index.php

Self-Efficacy in Speaking of Esl Students in Hyflex Classroom

Rizal Dapat, PhD[1], Pamela Mantuhac, PhD[2]
[1,2]College of Education and Liberal Arts, Languages Department, Adamson University, Manila, Philippines.
Email: [1]rizal.dapat@adamson.edu.ph [2]pamela.mantuhac@adamson.edu.ph
Corresponding Author*: Rizal O. Dapat & Pamela Mantuhac

Abstract
The HyFlex classroom, which combines in-person and virtual instruction to meet the diverse needs of students, has become a revolutionary approach in the rapidly evolving educational landscape. This modality presents both opportunities and challenges for learners of English as a second language (ESL), particularly in terms of oral communication. With an emphasis on six domains—communication mode, technological competence, feedback reception, participation level, confidence, and self-regulation—this study sought to evaluate ESL students' self-efficacy in speaking English in a HyFlex classroom. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, and was grounded in Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. While semi-structured interviews with English teachers offered contextual insights into students' speaking proficiency, difficulties, and classroom behaviors, the structured survey assessed students' self-assessment across the six domains. While most ESL students believed they were competent speakers, the results revealed that their confidence varied depending on the delivery method, with many stating they felt more at ease in asynchronous or one-on-one settings than in live group discussions. While confidence and self-regulation were identified as relative weaknesses, technological proficiency and the ability to receive feedback were found to be strong areas of self-efficacy. According to the interviews, students frequently struggle with linguistic anxiety, a lack of opportunities for unplanned interaction, and time and learning resource management in a HyFlex setting. To address these problems, educators employed targeted strategies, including oral drills, interactive assignments, and customized feedback, to enhance students' self-esteem. This study highlights the importance of tailored support systems and responsive teaching strategies in enhancing ESL students' oral communication skills. Teachers can create more successful speech lab exercises and classroom interventions that not only improve proficiency but also encourage learner autonomy and engagement in hybrid learning environments by knowing the elements that affect self-efficacy in speaking.
Keywords: *HyFlex Learning - ESL Students - Self-Efficacy - Oral Communication - Hybrid Education*

INTRODUCTION

As early as 2020, a few Asian countries reopened their schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, China, Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan were successful in implementing health protocols and guidelines among their students as school officials, faculty, and staff welcomed them back in their physical classrooms (Melnick et al., 2020), while most Asian countries gradually came back to on-site learning the year after except for Bangladesh and the Philippines (Westfall, 2021). In the third quarter of 2022, students in the Philippines began attending face-to-face classes in more than 24,000 schools, while almost 30,000 schools continued to hold classes through blended learning (CNN Philippines, 2022).

The silver lining was when the Philippines ranked 22nd out of 111 countries in the 2022 English Proficiency Index (EPI) conducted by Education First. The EPI ranks the world's most significant countries and regions, benchmarking adult English proficiency globally. The country's "high proficiency" EPI score among adults was described as sufficient for making work presentations, understanding television shows, and reading newspapers (Business World, 2022). However, there is a strong correlation between the test results and the proportion of students in each country who believe their intelligence can be developed. This is according to Isy Faingold, the Chief of Education at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Philippines. The Philippines was one of the countries with the lowest in terms of the proportion of students who think their intelligence can grow (PIDS, 2022)."

Undeniably, as students returned to on-site learning, their learning loss from the online learning period continued with them. Learning loss refers to the loss of specific or general information and abilities that occurs as a result of extended periods of school closure due to natural disasters, epidemics, or the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the school closure, students do not have equal opportunities to learn and experience time to learn, which leads to learning loss (Zhdanov et al., 2022). For instance, the Netherlands investigated and reported that 60% of their students had learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic

because they performed little to no progress from online learning at home which indicated even larger learning losses among students in countries with more extended school closures and inadequate infrastructure (Engzell, et al., 2021) such as the Philippines. This was proven by a joint study by the University of San Carlos (USC) and Thames International University among 3,600 students nationwide who scored below 60% (the passing grade of the Department of Education) on average, and they highlighted that the immense learning loss was higher among higher levels (Marcelo, 2023).

Furthermore, international exams for English proficiency, such as the EPI, do not include writing and speaking items (Boas, 2015). Although speaking is only a domain of English language proficiency, it is considered the most in-demand, especially among ESL/EFL adult learners and professionals (Dincer, 2017). Speaking requires several intricate and productive skills simultaneously, which can be developed at different rates through constant use with a specific community or group of speakers (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022). This process was compromised during the complete transition to online learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, it is suggested that the reopening of schools should require assessments to identify any lag during the school closure and complete online learning, which focuses on foundational skills in math and language (De Hoyos & Saavedra, 2021). This proposed study recognizes a self-efficacy tool to assess the speaking of ESL learners as they transition from online to blended to face-to-face learning. The self-efficacy assessment in speaking helps a student acknowledge their capacity, management, and attainment in delivering speaking situations, tasks, and activities in a Hyflex classroom, leading to a positive outcome. Ningias and Indriani (2021) utilized their self-efficacy in speaking with their EFL students, and they discovered that their students had strong self-efficacy in speaking during online learning, which helped facilitate their learning transition in one way or another.

The transition of students from online learning to blended learning to complete face-to-face learning has significant implications for 21st-century learners, including ESL students. In higher education, another mode of learning emerged during the reopening of schools – HyFlex learning, which is conducted in a physical classroom and synchronously online through videoconferencing applications such as Zoom, Teams, and GMeet. The HyFlex learning approach was generally appreciated by college students, despite their acknowledgement of some communication challenges between those who attended through different modes (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021).

Considering all these factors, the proposed study will investigate the speaking performance of ESL students during HyFlex learning using a self-efficacy assessment. Specifically, the proposed study aims to describe the speaking performance of ESL students during HyFlex learning; to identify the preferred speaking activities of ESL students during HyFlex learning; to recognize the contribution of these preferred speaking activities in recovering from their learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic; and to propose Speech Laboratory enhanced speaking program for college students based on the study's findings.

Currently, the Languages Department utilizes a speech lab resource/module that was designed many years ago. While an existing speech lab module may have served its purpose in the past, designing a new one based on the results of recent research is necessary to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. This will be customized to meet the specific needs and demands of ESL students, promoting contextual relevance, aligning with university curricular goals, offering flexibility and adaptation, strengthening institutional branding and identity, and ensuring long-term sustainability. Tailoring the module to the university environment and student demographic enhances engagement, learning outcomes, and a unified educational experience that aligns with Adamson University's goals and vision.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the profile of the ESL student respondents in terms of sex and academic course.
- To assess the students' self-efficacy in speaking across the following domains: communication mode, technological competence, feedback reception, participation level, confidence, and self-regulation
- To find out whether there are significant differences in the students' self-efficacy ratings when grouped according to their profile.
- To describe how English teachers assess the overall speaking proficiency of ESL students in HyFlex classrooms.
- To identify the main challenges ESL students face in speaking English in a HyFlex learning environment.

- To explore the strategies and activities employed by teachers to enhance ESL students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking during HyFlex classes.
- To propose inputs for the design of speech laboratory activities aimed at improving ESL students' self-efficacy in speaking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Speaking Skills of ESL Students

Speaking English as a second language is usually described as developmental and challenging. ESL students recognize the need and importance of speaking English for academic, professional, and social communication. However, research highlights the psychological and academic challenges they face when speaking English in various contexts.

Psychologically, ESL students experience language anxiety in making mistakes and being criticized for sounding wrong (Ali et al., 2020). Language anxiety is particularly prevalent in language learning situations (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022), such as public speaking, class presentations, and recitations, which exacerbate stage fright and affect their English-speaking abilities.

Academically, some language policies in the classroom and schools are contributing to ESL students' challenges with English speaking. They acknowledge that they have an inadequate vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and grammatical lapses, which contribute to their hesitation in speaking English (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022). Still, in English classes, they are required to speak fully in correct English (grammar, pronunciation, structure, and vocabulary) and forced to speak immediately before they are ready. The English teachers' pedagogical principles are disconnected from their instructional methods, which prevents them from affecting their ESL students' speaking skills (Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021).

2. Speaking in a Virtual Classroom

Global changes occurred when the COVID-19 virus spread rapidly and affected all countries worldwide. This challenging time impacted the global educational system, which even caused temporary or permanent closure of numerous academic institutions. The schools transformed their physical classrooms to sustain the learning of students from basic education to graduate studies. Technology and the Internet were instrumental in this academic transformation, so students were transitioned into an online virtual classroom.

According to Hamouda's (2020) study, teaching speaking in virtual classes proved more advantageous to students than the traditional method, leading to improved speaking performance. The findings revealed that students found enjoyment, enthusiasm, and variety in speaking in their virtual class. Students favored the virtual class because of its accessibility, extended class time, and teacher connection, which contributed to their improved target language skills and effective class participation.

Likewise, the transformation to the new normal in education involved not only the virtual classroom but also electronic learning materials. The rise of various online opportunities, educational platforms, websites, and programs has made speaking English available to everyone. These educational resources on the Internet can provide interactive, personalized, and effective communication to language speakers and learners (Styfanyshyn & Kalymon, 2021). If no one in the household can assist the student with speaking English, a substantial amount of input from media (e.g., YouTube) can be a helpful tool for practicing speaking.

3. Speaking in Blended Learning

Computers and the Internet have put a premium on education by blending technology in the classroom. According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2013), blended learning is the application of online and offline (in-person) teaching and learning. In a blended learning class, students can join the discussion physically with the teacher, which can be supplemented by online learning of the same topics discussed in class. Thus, classroom and online learning are parallel and complementary to each other.

Moreover, blended learning keeps the students at the center of learning because it involves technology, collaborative learning, role flexibility, and independent learning. Thirty-five percent of higher education institutions (HEIs) and 12% of distance education institutions in the US have implemented blended learning courses (Dziuban et al., 2018). Relative to this, blended learning has been used in several studies on speaking enhancement. For instance, Ginaya et al. (2018) found that college students exposed to blended learning with WebQuest application tasks experienced a significant increase in their learning motivation and interest, which in turn led to improved English-speaking abilities. Moreover, Hussein Also Wayegh et al. (2022) recently discovered an improvement in their students' English listening and

speaking skills by providing them with blended learning activities in face-to-face classes. The blended learning activities assessed student engagement, satisfaction, instructor involvement, and subject comprehension and evaluation using the web platform Blackboard, forums, and audio resources. Their research indicates that using blended learning leads to favorable student engagement, satisfaction, instructor involvement, effective content delivery, and positive assessment outcomes.

4. Speaking Challenges in Online Learning

The shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on language learning. Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) found that both teachers and students in the United States experienced less language development for speaking than for writing. Participants believed in the importance of learning English before and after the pandemic, so their responses were based on their demographic information and proficiency gains. Moreover, the findings revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the stress experienced by both teachers and students. The priority of teachers to teach and students to learning decreased because of a new variety of stressors they experienced during the pandemic. Most of all, the students struggled more than their teachers during the transition to online learning instruction (p. 141).

Likewise, based on the results of Englishtina et al.'s (2021) case study, the fear of making mistakes and a lack of confidence hinder the likelihood of students speaking in synchronous classes to enrich their vocabulary and improve their English communication. Moreover, these problems have become increasingly significant over the past two years of teaching and learning online. Thus, most students in the study prefer to communicate offline rather than online because they can see each other's gestures and body language, there is no error connection, and they can focus more on the communication.

To ensure school safety and salvage the semester during the COVID-19 outbreak, everyone transitioned to online platforms. Many teachers and students had anxiety due to the unfamiliar move from mixed learning to entirely online education, since they were new to the online education experience. The ambiguity and unforeseen consequences of the worldwide pandemic on the educational system heightened the stress levels of instructors and pupils. Speech anxiety was seen in participants and students during Zoom sessions that used cameras and virtual presentations (Prentis, 2021).

Similarly, students in the Philippines shared the same sentiments, particularly in local regions. Specifically, the synchronous online instructions during the community lockdown due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus showed unpreparedness and anxiety among students. The struggling Internet connectivity and available gadgets for learning were the main sentiments of the local students (Pastor, 2020). Challenges in remote learning for university students during the health crisis included issues like unstable internet connection, lack of resources, power outages, unclear content, excessive activities, minimal teacher support, limited peer interaction, distractions from home responsibilities, poor learning environment, financial problems, physical health concerns, and mental health issues (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

5. Hyflex Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

HyFlex is a coined word from hybrid and flexible. This new format of learning consists of blending students' online attendance with face-to-face classes. The key principles in HyFlex learning are: (a) providing options for students in attending class; (b) presenting equal learning activities for students online and onsite; (c) maximizing the same set of learning materials for all students; (d) establishing technological skills for students participating online and onsite; and (e) using authentic materials as assessments. Proponents claim that these principles establish the HyFlex learner as more learner-centered and flexible than blended learning, as students are provided with more options that fit their learning needs and course experience (Miller et al., 2020).

The academic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted school officials and faculty to provide options for their students, taking into account health protocols and geographical conditions. Some higher education institutions have proposed the HyFlex learning model to increase students' flexibility while lessening the academic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students attending a course in HyFlex learning were interviewed to gather their feedback on this new learning format. It revealed that students appreciated the school's initiative to return to normalcy through HyFlex learning, to some extent. However, they did not find it the most optimal mode for learning because they found it tedious to engage in cooperative interactions with students in different learning modes (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021).

On the other hand, Verrecchia and McGlinchey (2021) compared a class taught face-to-face for a year with the same class using HyFlex learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The quiz and examination

results showed better scores for students in the HyFlex learning than in their face-to-face quizzes and examinations. Another result was compared in the affective domain assessment of the class, where no difference was evident between the classes. The proponents noted that HyFlex learning had a slight cognitive advantage for the class but not an affective one. Thus, this factor can be considered in the delivery of this proposed study for ESL learners.

For this reason, HyFlex learning is suggested to be redesigned especially for college students to adapt to the new normal conditions during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Raman and his colleagues (2021) provide practical tips for higher education faculty in preparing a HyFlex classroom. The faculty should understand the key distinctions of the COVID-19 HyFlex model, where the use of collaborative work is effectively leveraged as a learning tool. A thorough analysis of the dimensions of group work should yield beneficial outcomes not only for students' academic success but also for the university's economic stability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). This is ideal for assessing ESL students' speaking self-efficacy in the research environment. According to SCT, self-efficacy beliefs influence behavior, performance, and learning. Self-efficacy drives how people approach and perform activities in this paradigm. SCT helps researchers understand how ESL students' self-efficacy beliefs affect their speaking proficiency assessments. Specifically, in light of the research questions, SCT offers a lens for understanding how ESL students' self-efficacy beliefs impact their assessment of speaking proficiency at various levels. In terms of communication mode, self-efficacy beliefs influence students' confidence in using both in-person and virtual communication modes to speak English. As for technical competence, self-efficacy attitudes influence how students perceive their technical competence. Higher tech communication self-efficacy makes Hyflex learners more willing to use digital tools. Feedback reception is being paved the way by self-efficacy beliefs to realize how students understand oral communication feedback. Students with higher self-efficacy are more inclined to accept constructive comments to improve their speaking abilities. Furthermore, self-efficacy influences students' participation in speaking. It increases student participation in in-person and online dialogues. It also affects pupils' speaking confidence. Higher self-efficacy leads to more forceful English-speaking students. Finally, the theory emphasizes high self-regulation, as speakers are more likely to set objectives, track their progress, and employ effective strategies to develop their speaking abilities. In brief, the Social Cognitive Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how ESL students' self-efficacy beliefs influence their Hyflex classroom assessments of speaking competency across various domains. This research's theoretical perspective emphasizes the impact of self-efficacy on students' behavior, attitudes, and performance.

Research Paradigm

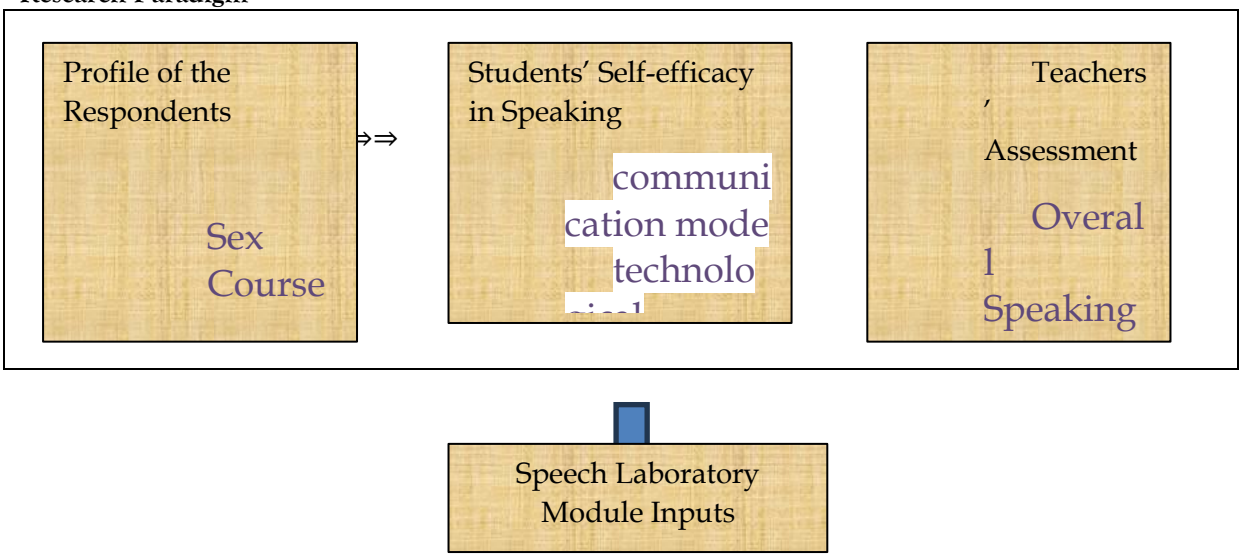

Figure 1 highlights the purpose of this research, which is to examine several elements of ESL students' self-efficacy in speaking within a Hyflex classroom environment. Firstly, the study examined the respondents' demographics, including their gender and course. Then, it investigated the respondents' appraisal of self-efficacy in speaking, concentrating on communication method, technical competence, feedback receipt, involvement level, confidence, and self-regulation. The research also examined whether there were any changes in self-efficacy ratings when respondents were divided into their respective profiles. Additionally, the opinions of English language instructors were collected to define the overall speaking competency of ESL students in the Hyflex classroom and to identify the key obstacles these students face while speaking English in such a learning setting. Furthermore, the study examined the tactics and activities employed by instructors to enhance ESL students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking during Hyflex lessons. Finally, the study's findings informed the design of successful speech laboratory activities, with the ultimate goal of enhancing students' self-efficacy in speaking within the dynamic Hyflex classroom. Overall, the research aimed to contribute to the understanding of self-efficacy in language learning and to advance the development of language teaching techniques in the Hyflex environment.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate ESL students' self-efficacy in speaking in HyFlex classrooms, this study employed a mixed-methods design. A structured self-efficacy questionnaire was used in the quantitative phase and administered to students randomly selected from four Manila educational institutions. The tool assessed several constructs, including self-regulation, participation, confidence, communication style, feedback reception, and technological proficiency. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (ANOVA and t-tests). Purposive sampling was used in the qualitative phase to interview English teachers who had previously taught in HyFlex environments. These interviews revealed important details about observed student difficulties and instructional strategies.

With Cronbach's Alpha scores above 0.90 for all constructs, the study's instrumentation consisted of a validated self-efficacy scale that showed strong internal consistency. The Shapiro-Wilk test, which the researchers used to identify the proper statistical tests, indicated that none of the variables were normally distributed, necessitating the use of non-parametric tests such as the Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests. The interview guide, on the other hand, concentrated on gathering data regarding the methods instructors employ to improve students' speaking confidence and engagement in both in-person and virtual contexts.

A combination of surveys and interviews was used to collect and analyze the data. Students' self-efficacy in speaking exercises, both in-person and online, was evaluated by the surveys. Instructor narratives about observed student performance, communication difficulties, and intervention techniques were recorded in the interviews. To provide a more thorough and verified understanding of student self-efficacy in HyFlex learning environments, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data, and triangulation was used to synthesize findings from both quantitative and qualitative sources. In the end, this mixed-methods approach produced focused suggestions for institutional support and instructional improvement tactics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assessment of Students' Self-efficacy in Speaking

The results showed that ESL students generally had a high level of self-efficacy when speaking in a HyFlex learning environment. All six domains that were assessed—communication mode, technological competence, feedback reception, participation level, confidence, and self-regulation—had composite means above 3.00. Feedback reception had the highest mean (M = 3.40), indicating that students value and actively seek constructive feedback to help them improve their language skills. This backs up more recent work by Wang et al. (2021), who found that giving learners frequent formative can help them stay engaged and improve their language skills Students liked how feedback helped them in both real life and online situations, which showed that they had a growth mindset and wanted to keep getting better.

Technological competence also received a high average score (M = 3.38), indicating that students felt comfortable using digital tools such as learning management systems, conferencing apps, and speech platforms. This result aligns with Yu and Zheng's (2022) study, which demonstrated that digital fluency is crucial for enabling students to be independent and confident in hybrid or HyFlex classrooms. However, there was a slight difference in how ready they thought they were to learn more advanced speech

delivery and assessment tools, like AI-powered pronunciation coaches or advanced voice modulation systems (Gokhale et al., 2020). This indicates a growing need for digital literacy training that emphasizes oral communication.

At the same time, communication mode (M = 3.33) and participation level (M = 3.32) were also rated highly, with students feeling sure about speaking in both synchronous and asynchronous settings. Al-Samarraie et al. (2023) also found that active participation and engagement strategies are important for keeping communication quality in asynchronous discussions. However, some students, especially those in groups, showed clear signs of anxiety during live presentations, which was shown by the slightly lower confidence score (M = 3.15). As Ortega (2021) said, performance anxiety when speaking a second language is still a problem in real-time communication tasks, even though people are spending more time online.

Lastly, the self-regulation domain, which had the lowest overall mean (M = 3.11), indicated that students were aware of their learning goals but were not always proactive in tracking their progress. This finding aligns with the recent study by Navarro et al. (2019), which noted that ESL students often require structured scaffolding and mentoring to effectively utilize self-regulated learning strategies in online or blended settings. Although students expressed a desire to improve, they rarely followed up on feedback, sought learning resources, or consulted with their peers, indicating a need for more explicit self-regulation coaching.

Overall, the results indicate that HyFlex learning can help ESL students feel more confident when speaking if it is designed with strategies that provide them with ample feedback, utilize technology, and support their emotional well-being. Still, the data highlights important areas for growth, especially in reducing anxiety about speaking, enhancing tool skills, and providing students with more freedom. The implications call for an ESL approach that combines teaching, technology, and social and emotional support to get the best speaking results in changing digital learning environments.

Differences in the Assessment of Students' Self-Efficacy According to Profile

The results of this study indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of confidence students have in their speaking skills based on their sex. This is because all six areas—communication mode, technological competence, feedback reception, participation level, confidence, and self-regulation—had p-values greater than 0.05. This supports the idea of gender equity in school assessments, as it shows that both boys and girls perceive themselves as equally proficient in speaking tasks. Nguyen and Dao (2021) and Albalawi et al. (2020) have conducted further research that supports this finding. They stress that when learning environments are inclusive and everyone has equal access to resources, gender no longer affects how well someone learns a language or their self-assessment. These results indicate that digital environments and inclusive teaching methods are becoming increasingly important in bridging the gap between boys and girls in skill development.

However, the analysis of all the courses shows a different pattern. Students' academic programs had a significant impact on how they communicated and how effectively they utilized technology. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that architecture students felt much more confident in their ability to communicate than computer engineering and education students. Additionally, students in BA Communication and mechanical engineering reported being more proficient in using technology than students in education. The differences are likely due to the distinct types of work that students in architecture and communication programs are required to undertake. For example, architecture and communication programs focus on presentations, visual-oral communication, and project-based learning, whereas mechanical engineering programs typically utilize technical digital tools in their classes (Martínez-Caro et al., 2021). On the other hand, education majors may not have as many opportunities to practice with specialized speaking or technology-based tools, which could make them less confident and less competent. These results show that how confident someone is in their speaking skills depends on more than just their traits. It also depends on the learning experiences they have in a specific program. Because of this, institutions need to consider how to provide various types of support across different fields. For example, incorporating activities that require extensive communication and technology use into school curricula may help students feel more confident in speaking and utilizing technology. Additionally, encouraging collaboration between departments, such as having communication or engineering students mentor education majors, could be a low-cost, high-impact way to make the self-efficacy field more equitable.

These results are similar to those found by Rezaei et al. (2023), which emphasize that experiential learning, discipline-specific tasks, and peer modeling influence self-efficacy. In conclusion, although gender may no longer be a barrier to speaking self-efficacy in HyFlex learning, there are still differences between programs that need to be addressed through inclusive and contextualized teaching methods.

QUALITATIVE RESULT DISCUSSION

The HyFlex learning of ESL students presents substantial evidence on their speaking proficiency and challenges. Purposive communication teachers have observed their students' development by assessing their overall speaking proficiency in the HyFlex classroom. Based on the qualitative data, these descriptions are thematically classified into five categories: good/satisfactory, poor/bad, average/fair, above average/excellent, and diverse.

Most of the teacher participants (21) describe the speaking proficiency of their ESL students in hyflex learning as good and satisfactory based on three significant reasons that emerged from the qualitative data. First, ESL students actively participate in class discussions and interact with their classmates (both in virtual and face-to-face) using understandable English. This can be classified as the ease of communication when students feel at ease connecting and interacting with their peers and instructor in a hyflex course, which is important for students' success (Mentzer & Mohandas, 2022). Second, though they are not fluent, most ESL students speak comfortably and confidently in English in online and in-person discussions. Hyflex learning prevents students from feeling embarrassed because they can opt to be off-camera while speaking, which reduces speaking anxiety and insecurity (Miftakh et al., 2023). Third, their positive classroom (virtual and physical) experience results in their engagement in presentations and speeches in class despite some English language challenges and necessary improvement in pronunciation. There is a significant impact on students' English language proficiency in speaking, as hyflex learning incorporates a face-to-face component that allows them to practice speaking while utilizing English videos, audio, and other online materials suggested by their teachers (Pramila & Thomas, 2019).

On the other hand, some (12) teacher participants describe the speaking proficiency of their ESL students in hyflex learning as poor/bad. They observe that ESL students are not proficient in English in the hyflex mode of learning because the ESL students are struggling with their vocabulary in speaking English spontaneously, and tend to code-switch along the way. ESL learners often become overly conscious of the appropriateness of English vocabulary when speaking, which can hinder the acquisition and learning of English vocabulary, contributing to fluency-based difficulties among ESL learners (Separa et al., 2020).

Notably, a few teacher participants (between 7-8) are divided in describing their ESL students' speaking proficiency as average/fair, above average/excellent, and diverse/different. The average/fair speaking proficiency is described as neither the worst nor the best speaking in the English language. For the teacher participants, it involves common English grammar lapses and mispronunciations, as well as a lack of spontaneity. However, ESL students can understand English questions and elaborate on their English sentences to answer them. At the same time, above-average or excellent speaking proficiency is characterized by fluency, conciseness, and confidence, which can be achieved through regular online practice. Lastly, the diverse speaking proficiency of ESL students depends on various factors, including their linguistic background, language learning strategies, English language exposure, language acquisition, and technological aptitude.

HyFlex is found to be a promising mode of learning for students because of its association with flexibility. Likewise, the hyflex mode becomes a higher level of flexible learning for ESL, but the challenges are undeniable and inevitable. ESL students recognize their main challenges when speaking in a hybrid learning environment. First, linguistic factors —specifically, lexicon (vocabulary), morphology (word structure), and syntax (grammar) —are found to be the most challenging for 30 ESL students, based on the qualitative results. For them, speaking English in class (both online and face-to-face) is a struggle in choosing the right terms and words to express themselves spontaneously, while considering the correct sentence structure (grammar). Speaking with various English words to express one's thoughts in the correct order of sentences takes much effort, considering the mother tongue (L1) of ESL students. Similarly, several evidence showed that the most speaking challenges for ESL/EFL students in the classroom were lacking vocabulary (the lexicon) and difficulty in the word composition or lack of grammatical (syntax) (Ghafar & Raheem, 2023; Sabata et al., 2023; Chand, 2021; Suryani et al., 2020).

The second highest speaking challenge among ESL students is a lack of confidence and understanding. Many (23) ESL students claim that the lack of confidence is rooted in the fear of judgment from peers

and teachers, which may result in embarrassment. Class recitation and the opening of the camera (during synchronous classes) are another source of their nervousness, which may lead to a lack of understanding and an inability to speak English. Likewise, based on the results of Englishtina et al.'s (2021) case study, the fear of making mistakes and a lack of confidence hinder the likelihood of students speaking in synchronous classes to enrich their vocabulary and improve their English communication. In contrast, Hyflex learning prevents students from embarrassment because they can opt to be off-camera while speaking, which lessens speaking anxiety and insecurity (Miftakh et al., 2023). Thus, it is notable to recognize that speaking activities in hybrid learning for ESL students should continue to strengthen their confidence and understanding of the English language.

Third, technical issues remain to challenge ESL students' speaking in a hybrid learning environment. Some (15) of them identify unstable Internet connections, poor quality of audio and video, and the effort to troubleshoot Internet and gadget problems as technical challenges in HyFlex learning. These challenges hinder their understanding, heighten their speaking anxiety, and demotivate them in their hyflex class. Similarly, internet connection problems were found to affect the speaking skills of ESL students in blended learning (Miftakh et al., 2023) and in hybrid learning in general (Tasker, 2023).

Lastly, a lack of interaction is notably a challenge in hybrid learning, even for a few (7) ESL students. For them, limited interaction occurs particularly in large classes, where class participation becomes unnoticeable due to a lack of collaborative or peer speaking activities during both online and face-to-face classes, as well as limited feedback from classmates and teachers to improve speaking skills. In contrast, the most common problem experienced by students in hybrid learning is the lack of interaction with both students and teachers (Mobo et al., 2022), as well as EFL students' speaking activities in online learning (Annisa, 2022).

These obstacles in hybrid-flexible learning affect both ESL students and their instructors. The challenges faced by teachers in hybrid-flexible learning include technical difficulties, limited interaction, implementing group activities, facilitation and classroom management, surveillance and monitoring, lack of training, utilizing traditional tools, and laborious setup (Kadangos et al., 2023).

Thus, this study collected qualitative data on the strategies and activities employed by teachers to enhance the ESL students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking during hyflex classes. Predominantly, (24) teachers employ speaking activities in hyflex learning, specifically debates, speech delivery, oral presentations, and interviews. They believe that these speaking activities: (1) improve the ESL students' confidence; (2) practice organizing their thoughts in English language; and (3) make them to be comfortable in expressing and sharing their feelings to other people Moreover, collaborative activities is being used by several (17) teachers in developing confidence and self-efficacy in speaking among ESL students. In particular, these activities include one-on-one and group discussions/forums, interaction with foreign classmates, role-playing with real-life examples, and peer feedback/conversation in English. Teachers observe that these collaborative activities (1) foster a sense of community among students, which eases their speaking apprehensions; (2) create a supportive speaking environment among them both in online and face-to-face classes. Role-playing and group discussions as teaching strategies in online speaking activities have been shown to assist EFL/ESL students in task completion and English communication practice (Tran, 2021). These methods are beneficial for enhancing students' vocabulary, creativity, and speaking skills (Otodu & Khoiriyah, 2023). HyFlex courses should prioritize fairness across online and face-to-face modes to enhance student engagement by acknowledging the unique characteristics of each mode and providing customized assistance for student learning (Binnewies & Wang, 2019).

In addition, some (10) teachers utilize interactive activities in hyflex learning to enhance ESL students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking. These interactive activities involve online games, graphic organizers, online platforms, multimedia resources, virtual language sessions, and technology integration in speaking. They regard these interactive activities in (1) providing a welcoming environment to ESL students to hone their speaking abilities, promote peer cooperation, offer helpful criticism, and organize assignments; (2) encouraging self-reflection on their speaking progress; and (3) making them feel confident regardless of their language proficiency. Relatively, these interactive activities can be integrated in collaborative and speaking activities to employ a holistic strategy in enhancing the ESL students' confidence and self-efficacy in speaking during Hyflex classes.

With these results, teachers in hyflex learning are employing student-centered speaking activities for their ESL students. Their answers meet the key principles in HyFlex learning are: (a) providing options for students in attending class; (b) presenting equal learning activities for students online and onsite; (c) maximizing the same set of learning materials for all students; (d) establishing technological skills for students participating online and onsite; and (e) using authentic materials as assessments. Proponents claim that these principles establish the HyFlex learner as more learner-centered and flexible than blended learning, as students are provided with more options that fit their learning needs and course experience (Miller et al., 2020).

The study finds that there are equal numbers of male and female ESL students, and they all exhibit high levels of speaking self-efficacy in various areas, indicating that the learning environment is supportive and welcoming. However, the fact that most students are Education majors suggests that the program requires more targeted help and resources. Although confidence levels are the same for both genders, differences in self-efficacy by academic course highlight the importance of tailoring interventions to the specific needs of each discipline. Teachers recognize that ESL students' speaking skills vary, and they have employed a range of methods to assist students in addressing challenges in the HyFlex environment, particularly issues related to language use, confidence, technology, and socialization. These results indicate that ESL students require individualized teaching methods to facilitate their growth in hybrid learning settings.

To support these findings, the study recommends that schools consider both the gender breakdown and the number of students in each program when allocating their resources. They should continue to build students' confidence by encouraging them to speak up and creating a space where everyone feels welcome, regardless of their gender. At the same time, students in specific programs where speaking self-efficacy is lower should get different kinds of help. To address HyFlex-related issues, the teacher should focus on vocabulary and code-switching, enhance the technical infrastructure, and engage students more actively both online and offline. Through professional development, teachers should learn how to effectively utilize various teaching methods, including drills, peer collaboration, and interactive speech tasks. Additionally, speech lab materials should be enhanced to encompass a broader range of topics, provide guides for pronunciation, incorporate systems for peer feedback, and include culturally relevant content. This will make the speech lab a more engaging and helpful space for ESL learners to enhance their speaking skills.

Rationale

The implementation of speech laboratory learning materials is based on the importance of effective communication in students' academic, personal, and professional lives. The materials encompass a diverse range of speech topics, model speeches, and interactive software, catering to students' varied learning needs. They address speech anxiety, pronunciation challenges, self-assessment, peer feedback, cultural sensitivity training, and the integration of technology. The materials also provide access to speech-language pathologists and continuous learning resources, addressing vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. The goal is to equip students with the skills and resources they need to become proficient, confident, and effective communicators, preparing them for success in academics and careers.

Inputs for Speech Laboratory Module

Inputs	**Description**
1. Diverse Speech Topics	Offer an extensive selection of speech topics, encompassing areas such as contemporary issues, personal anecdotes, and scholarly disciplines, to enable students to choose subjects that spark their enthusiasm.
2. Model Speeches	Include well-crafted and well-celebrated speeches for effective delivery.
3. Interactive Language Dialogues:	Create interactive dialogues or scenarios that enable students to engage in conversations with virtual or recorded characters, with a particular emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

4. Oral Storytelling Workshops:	Organize seminars that provide students with opportunities to refine their oral storytelling approaches, so improving their narrative abilities and self-assurance.
5. Language Poetry Readings:	Organize sessions for students to engage in reciting and performing poetry or renowned speeches in the desired language, with a specific emphasis on refining their pronunciation and expressiveness.
6. Speech Evaluation Practice:	Facilitate a rotation system where students alternate presenting speeches or presentations, with their peers offering constructive comments, thereby promoting effective communication and personal growth.
7. News Broadcast Simulations:	Require students to produce and present simulated news broadcasts in the speech laboratory, enhancing their ability to articulate and deliver news effectively.
8. Language TED Talks:	Motivate students to meticulously prepare and deliver concise presentations in the style of TED Talks, focusing on subjects they personally select. This will allow them to refine their abilities in public speaking and the art of persuasion.

REFERENCES

1. Adickalam, P. A., & Yunus, M. M. (2022). Exploring English speaking anxiety and self-efficacy among ESL learners: A Malaysian perspective. Asian EFL Journal, 24(4), 47–70.
2. Albalawi, N. S., Almutairi, M. M., & Alenezi, M. T. (2020). Gender and language learning: Differences in attitudes and performance. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 16(2), 890–901.
3. Al-Samarraie, H., Shamsuddin, A., & Alzahrani, A. I. (2023). Fostering online learning engagement through asynchronous discussion strategies. Education and Information Technologies, 28, 303–322. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-11179-9
4. Gokhale, A. A., Machina, K., & Braughler, J. (2020). Enhancing oral communication skills with AI tools in engineering education. International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (iJEP), 10(3), 89–95. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v10i3.13353
5. Martínez-Caro, E., Cegarra-Navarro, J. G., & Alfonso-Ruiz, F. J. (2021). Digital transformation in higher education: Technology adoption, engagement, and learning performance. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 166, 120528. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120528
6. Navarro, J. R., Pérez-Sanagustín, M., & Fernández-March, A. (2019). Self-regulated learning in online higher education: Strategies and support. Education Sciences, 9(3), 184. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9030184
7. Nguyen, H. T. M., & Dao, P. H. T. (2021). Gender differences in EFL learners' self-efficacy beliefs: A Vietnamese context. Language Education and Assessment, 4(2), 93–112. https://doi.org/10.29140/lea.v4n2.361
8. Ortega, L. (2021). The role of anxiety in second language speaking performance: Revisiting evidence in light of virtual settings. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 41, 57–74. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000080
9. Rezaei, M., Baharloo, A., & Tavakoli, M. (2023). Peer modeling and discipline-specific tasks: Keys to building learners' self-efficacy. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 76, 101252. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2022.101252
10. Wang, J., Xu, B., & Zhang, H. (2021). Formative feedback in online learning: A pathway to learners' engagement and performance. Interactive Learning Environments, 29(6), 911–926. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1703018
11. Yu, T., & Zheng, B. (2022). Exploring the role of digital competence in students' HyFlex learning experience. Computers & Education, 180, 104445. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2022.104445