The Mediating Role of English Speaking Skills in the Relationship between Social Literacy and the Engagement of Students

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the mediating role of English speaking skills in the relationship between social literacy and student engagement in colleges and universities in Davao Oriental, Philippines. A non-experimental quantitative research design using descriptive-correlational research design was applied and employed stratified random sampling with 313 Education college students as a sample. Data collection was made through a survey instrument. Data analysis was done through Mean, Pearson-r, Multiple Regression, and Medgraph using the Sobel z-test. Results revealed that English speaking skills, social literacy, and engagement were high. A positive correlation between English speaking skills and social literacy, English speaking skills and student engagement, and social literacy and student engagement was proven in the study. The findings affirmed that English

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speaking skills played a partial mediation, thus it cannot fully account for the influence of social literacy on student engagement. Moreover, a high level of English-speaking skills helped increase the students' capability to be highly engaged in academics and other school-related activities. It is recommended that the administrators of tertiary education continue to have regular reviews, evaluations, and implementation of the existing curriculum. Also, there is a need to implement strengthen the English language as a medium of instruction on subjects that use the English language. For instance, an *English-only policy* is one of the best practices that schools should impose. Lastly, the researcher recommends the regular conduct of interviews such as entrance, yearly, and exit interviews using the English language.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Communication is an important form of conveying information. In fact, the voice, rhythm, and oral expression of speeches are valued much when it is properly conveyed [1]. However, speaking in public is one of the biggest fears encountered in college. It is one of the school-related activities that students should master in order to become well-trained professionals. According to one of the studies conducted by Fereira Marinho et al. in [2] (17), speaking in public is a predominant type of anxiety among college students and because of this, there have been issues with decreasing the students' participation in school activities and learning that help improves literacy skills [3].

Despite the fact that it is an indication of the students' motivational state of being in learning rather than a fixed characteristic trait of learning [3], the decreasing percentage of students' participation in school-provided activities has been alarming teachers in education throughout countries. Factors of student engagement include family, personal/staff, and the school. If none of the factors mentioned is present in a certain student, one is more likely to become disengaged in learning (Victoria State Government Education and Training) [35-41].

In order to be referred to as literate, an individual must hold integrated skills that are expected to be attained from education [4]. There are also indicators that a student is disengaged from learning such as regular absences, low literacy, lack of interest in school, negative interactions with peers, behavioral issues, and significant change in attitude (Victoria State Government Education and Training). There are studies that suggest that teachers should also make literacy experiences more relevant to students' interests, everyday life, or important current events to keep them engaged in learning (Adolescent Literacy.org).

According to Arthur and Davison, social literacy is both a prerequisite and an important requirement of an individual in education. They added that social literacy is also termed as social competence but social literacy is more broad and subtle and is a complex process when talking about how it is acquired (11). Moreover, the conduct of the study is important in order to emphasize the factors affecting the literacy of a student in the school setting and to examine if literacy influences student engagement through their English Speaking skills [42-51].

According to Alvermann and Phelps as cited by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon in 2013 [5] (376), in order for the student to learn and develop literacy, one must be engaged in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking through the active engagement in social interaction with others. Furthermore, socially interactive individuals are also engaged learners who acquire knowledge when they are able to speak to others and be actively involved. According to Marx, Simonsen, and Kitchel, in some institutions, preferably in colleges, the student's course engagement is one of the popular research topics (213). Frederics, Blumenfeld and Paris in 2004 as cited by Marx, et al. assert that college student engagement (SE) is a multidimensional concept that various researchers studied in order to understand different aspects to bridge success at the secondary and post-secondary levels of education (212). However, being academically engaged requires a learner to express oneself by speaking. The problem of inarticulateness in English speaking leads them to just hold their opinion and participation in the class (Hui 17).

According to Coates as cited by Delfino, student engagement is one of the significant concepts that are utilized to understand the conduct of students towards the teaching-learning process (1). The institutions that provide students with the needed understanding of their behavior will give an indication on how the directions and academic practices must work inside the institution. Teachers and facilitators see this as one of the powerful tools in designing instructions and efficient educational strategies for making the most out of the learning experiences of students (214). As labeled, engagement is a student's connection to learning and the learning environment which integrates behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects and is evaluated through psychological processes and physical activities (Marx, Simonsen & Kitchel, 213).

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

1.2 Research Objectives

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

1. To describe the level of Social Literacy in terms of:

    1.1. Intellectual Skills;
    1.2. Social Skills;
    1.3. Cooperation Skills; and,
    1.4. Social Attitudes and Values.

2. To ascertain the level of Student Engagement in terms of:

    2.1. Behavioral Engagement;
    2.2. Cognitive Engagement; and,
    2.3. Emotional/Psychological Engagement.

3. To measure the level of English Speaking Skills;

4. To establish the significance between:

    4.1. Social Literacy and Student Engagement;
    4.2. Social Literacy and English Speaking Skills;
    4.3. English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement; and,

5. To determine the significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among the Education students from the colleges in Davao Oriental.

1.3 Hypotheses

The researcher has come up with the following hypotheses:

Ho1. There is no established significance between:

    1.1. Social Literacy and Student Engagement;
    1.2. Social Literacy and English Speaking Skills;
    1.3. English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement; and,

Ho2. There is no significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills on the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among Education students from the colleges in Davao Oriental.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

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

2.1 English Speaking Skills

Speaking is one of the four language skills. It is a productive and active skill that is used by an individual to interact with others through a

conversation process (Ashour 1) [6]. Speaking is a skill that requires attention through receptive skills more than literary skills. Thus, it is a skill in which individuals utter or produce words and specific sentences to convey meaning and generate ideas (7).

According to Husnawati, [7] speaking is a skill that is very important for human existence in daily life since every person needs to communicate (2). As an important skill a human should have, speaking comprises micro-skills which include a part of speaking which should be mastered by a learner in order to communicate well with others (3).

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

Grammatical Accuracy. The knowledge of the language in the brain is called grammar. It is the product manifested by language knowledge that a human brain develops (Li, 726) [8]. Grammatical accuracy refers to the correct utilization of words in sentence construction both/either in dialogue and/or writing (Study.com). In Skehan's article as cited by Pereira, Javier, Bermudez, and Medina in 2018, grammatical accuracy is concerned with a learner's capacity to handle whatever level of language complexity she/he has and accuracy is essential for language to be automatic (129).

Vocabulary. Vocabulary has become a significant component in language proficiency since learners without necessary vocabulary knowledge cannot take enough advantage of opportunities such as interacting with others or within the self [9]. According to Kingsley and Grabner-Hagen, a vocabulary curriculum begins with clear learning goals, a careful selection of key terms, and the transformation of activities into quest challenges (545). Cheng added that the higher vocabulary size an individual has, the broader his language knowledge is. Vocabulary size refers to the number of words which a learner knows (989).

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

Fluency. To be proficient in English or any other language, it is not simply all about the correct usage of vocabulary and grammar [52-55]. An individual should consider the capacity to interact in social communication which entails that learners need to utilize language (Senra Silva, 212) [10]. Ellis and Sinclair as cited by Senra Silva, assert that the attainment of fluency in both native and foreign languages involves the acquisition of memorized sequences of language (213). Ortiz-Neira denotes that fluency is not an easy aspect to define but the narrowest definitions only include a few features, typically pausing, hesitations, and speech rate, whereas the broadest uses are virtually synonymous with speaking proficiency (115). Ahmed asserts language oral fluency and speech intelligibility are challenging processes that require a huge effort from both teachers and learners. Speech intelligibility has a great impact on how the student is able to express meaningful communication and also affects the way of speaking that reflects on the oral fluency of learners, specifically the EFL learners (1453). However, fluency in speaking can be blocked by teachers through the process of corrective feedback. Hence, teaching oral fluency becomes a challenge to teachers [11].

Pronunciation. Gilakjani refers English pronunciation as one of the most difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend time improving their pronunciation [56-61]. Added to that, Gilakjani stresses that understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of a learner's competence and it is also one of the most significant structures of language instruction because good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes learning difficulties (1249). In his prior study on

pronunciation in 2016, Gilakjani points out that this field is one of the most important features in language learning but teachers do not explicitly teach it. It is one of the most difficult challenges that language teachers encounter because, with the student's or the speaker's acceptable pronunciation, it covers the difficulty to notice the student's incorrect use of grammar and vocabulary (967).

Brabcová, Kateřina, and Radek defined Received Pronunciation as a foreign accent which is the term usually used today (39). English is the international language of the Philippines. Tagalog is the national language but English is widely spoken all over the country and is one of the major subjects taught in Education. Well-educated Filipinos are relatively fluent English speakers and have better pronunciation compared to other English language learners in Asia [12] (Mengqi 1).

Speaking, as one of the four language skills, is an important skill that a person should practice and master from his/her childhood. It is also a skill that is repeated over time and learned through interaction [62-69]. Without a chance to speak and express his opinions and ideas, a person is likely to be misunderstood. In a broader sense, when a person can hardly speak, the difficulty may affect his/her interaction with others. Hence, the aspects of speaking skills must be given enough attention for development as these aspects affect each other [70-74].

2.2 Social Literacy

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

According to Taylor and Leung, social interaction is an essential aspect of literacy learning and serves both as a context and a mode of learning. Educators can plan to create a classroom that promotes socialization and a community of learners where children interact socially and learn from each other (5). Teachers who are aware of the importance of socialization on the

students' literacy learning and who have the knowledge and skills to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy can create a classroom from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds participate actively in a variety of different activities (6). Az- Zahra, Sardaki and Bachtiar assert that social literacy ability is a person's capability to integrate in implementing all knowledge, skills, including attitudes and values in social life (163). The skills comprising social literacy ability are intellectual skills, social skills, cooperative skills, and attitudes and values (164).

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

Hummel points out that critical thinking allows people to live rational, productive, reasonable, and empathetic lives. An individual should have the crucial skills for conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Hence, without these, people would fail to succeed and intend to focus on survival only. Thus, critical thinking promotes the essence of humans to become better citizens because students learn to understand how their actions and thoughts create impact and affect others (5).

Social skills: Kılıç and Güngör Aytar refer social skills as the skills that increase the individual's relationship with his/her environment positively such as empathy, participation in group activities, helping each other, communicating with others, negotiation, and problem-solving. Social skills help in motivating good relationships between people. However, social skills are crucial for

academic achievement, general well-being, mental health, and social achievement (186).

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

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

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

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

Moreover, Atik and Ozer agree that teachers play an important role which affects the students' attitude development (452). Seker considers positive attitudes to be helpful to those students who aim for academic achievement. Hence, teachers praise the students with good attitudes inside and outside the classroom (348). However, in his study among middle-school children in Turkey in 2020, he found out that the higher the grade level of the student becomes, his/her attitude towards the school decreases (352). Thus, students who exhibit positive attitudes at school are found to be more successful than those with negative attitudes at school (Ak & Sayil, 297) [13]
.
Furthermore, Shu and Chen refer values to a person's overall view and overall evaluation of the surroundings, things or objects which are rules and guidelines that one person uses in order to measure external things (118-119). A value is an important role of the student's mental and physical development. It affects the person's behaviour, attitude and personality development. It is a factor that helps an individual to judge right from wrong, good or evil, honor from shame, views important factor in social life, make choices, and develop moral character in life (121). Thus, as the student matures, the cultivation of values is expected to prosper through the help of school education forming into a system. Schools are instruments where students gradually form and build their own values which are based on the most important factors such as personal desires, acceptance and growth of new knowledge, group relationships and individual relationships (119).

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

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

2.3 Student Engagement

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

According to Dougherty, student engagement was characterized by what Reschly and Christenson termed as *conceptual haziness* because there was a little agreement on what student engagement really means (10). Lloyd [3] asserts that student engagement is an indication of the students' *motivational state of being* in learning, rather than a fixed characteristic trait of learning. Furthermore, student engagement has multidimensional characteristics that are termed as Behavioural engagement, Emotional/ Psychological engagement and Cognitive engagement [14].

Behavioural Engagement. The observable component of student engagement is behavioural engagement [15]. According to Bagheri and Mohamadi, behavioural engagement comes from the idea of involvement such as participation in academic and social activities, energetic attendance, assignments and task completion. Added to that, students have the ability to follow rules and directions following classroom norms, on top of coming to class on time and avoiding unnecessary negative behaviors (6). Sun and Bin refer behavioural engagement as a more active, lasting and effective state of behaviour as it is a result of a learner's information-exchange tasks with learning resources under the control of the necessary tools for learning (2207). Dougherty agrees to the definition of behavioural engagement and refer it as the student's involvement in school including activities, positive conduct (pertaining to antisocial behaviors), participation in classroom learning and academic tasks, and participation in extracurricular activities (12-13).

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

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

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

Emotional/Psychological engagement. Emotional engagement is comprised by the students' sense of belongingness, feeling of competence, and motivation towards the concept of education. There are factors that are all said to contribute to

the students' willingness to participate. These factors include the positive and negative feedbacks from peers, teachers and administrators, and the school itself [14]. The concept of interest in school, identification with the school, belongingness, and positive attitude about learning in school belongs to Emotional engagement [15].

According to Dougherty (21-22), the feeling of belongingness has been found to predict academic performance across extensive indicators which include Grading Point Average (GPA), standardized test scores, reading performance, school effort, absenteeism, and grades. According to Lam, et al., as cited by Dougherty, these factors are linked to academic achievement through another form of emotional engagement. In addition, students with a high level of school belongingness experience more positive emotions and lesser disengagement in school. According to Finn as cited by Carter, emotional engagement is the affective component of engagement as an emotional bond or attachment students form in the institution (35). It is also referred to as positive and negative emotions a learner experiences in response to the teachers, peers, and the educational environment. Thus, a student is likely to enjoy education when s/he is emotionally engaged. Otherwise, the student with low emotional engagement is likely to experience boredom, sadness, anxiety or anger [16].

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

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Fig. 1. In this study the independent variable is social literacy as defined by Az-Zahra, H., Sardaki, S. and Bachtiar [4] (163-164). It contains the indicators which include: *intellectual skills; social skills; cooperation skills; and, attitudes/values. Intellectual skills* include the ability to: a) identify and define issues, b) make

hypotheses, write conclusions based on information, c) analyze and synthesize data, d) distinguish facts and opinions, e) formulate causal factors, f) submit opinions from different perspectives, g) make valuable judgment in making decisions. *Cooperation skills* include the ability to a) take roles in groups, b) participate in group discussions, and, c) participate in making group decisions. *Social skills* include the ability to a) feel social sensitivity; b) control self, c) exchange ideas and experiences with others. The *attitudes and values* include: a) knowing common values that are employed in the society, b) making decisions involving two choices based on value consideration, c) knowing guaranteed human rights for all citizens, d) developing loyalty as citizens, e) developing respect for the ideals and heritage of the nation, f) developing a sense of brotherhood among human beings.

The dependent variable is student engagement as defined by Delfino [17] (2) with the following indicators: *behavioral engagement; emotional/psychological engagement; and, cognitive engagement.*

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

The mediator of this study is represented by the English-speaking skills of students as defined by Basak (43-44). The students' English speaking skills are evaluated in terms of *fluency, pronunciation, content, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Fluency* refers to the students' ability to use language for communication. *Pronunciation* refers to the students' ability to produce sounds and follow stress and intonation. Those abilities must be in an acceptable manner. *Content* refers to the students' ability to communicate effectively, respond well to the topic, explain well and give specific examples about the topic. *Vocabulary* refers to the ability of the students to use necessary words and to understand the vocabulary questions. *Grammatical Accuracy* refers to the students' ability to produce suitable syntactical and morphological patterns in a given speech. It also refers to the students' ability to master a language as a system.
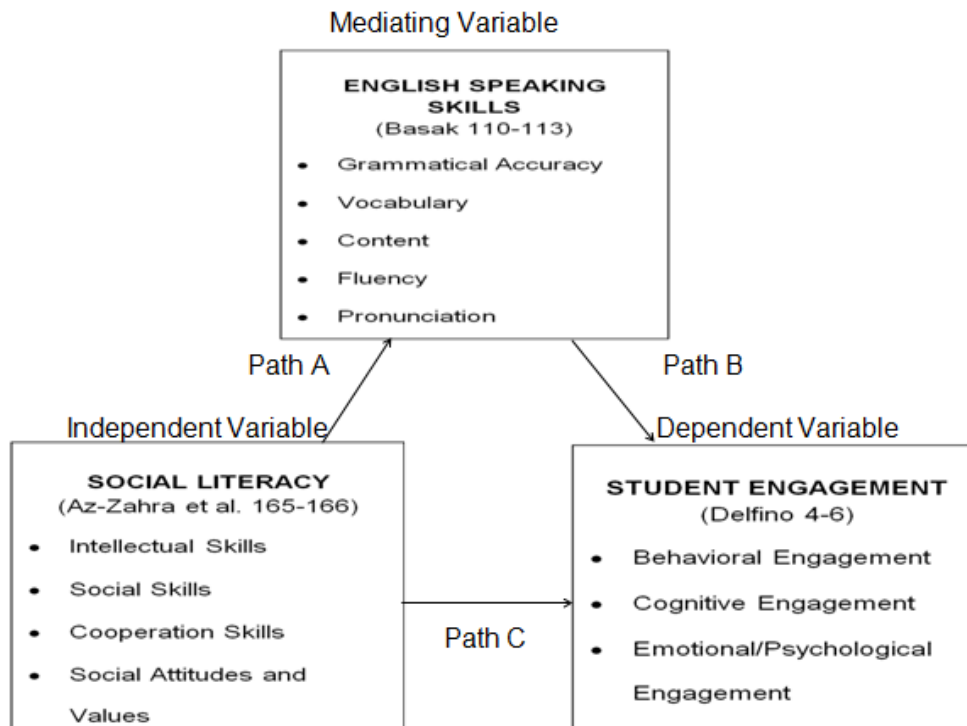
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Mediating Variable

ENGLISH SPEAKING
SKILLS
(Basak 110-113)

- Grammatical Accuracy
- Vocabulary
- Content
- Fluency
- Pronunciation

Path A

Path B

Independent Variable

SOCIAL LITERACY
(Az-Zahra et al. 165-166)

- Intellectual Skills
- Social Skills
- Cooperation Skills
- Social Attitudes and Values

Dependent Variable

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
(Delfino 4-6)

- Behavioral Engagement
- Cognitive Engagement
- Emotional/Psychological Engagement

Path C

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study

4. METHODOLOGY

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

4.1 Research Design

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

Descriptive-survey research is an appropriate method to identify the possible mediating role of English Speaking Skills in the relationship

between the Social Literacy and Engagement of Education students. A descriptive survey involves the collection of data to either test a hypothesis or describe the variables mentioned in the study. Data, which are typically numeric, will be collected through surveys (Espinosa 18). It seeks to describe the current status of an identified variable. The systematic collection of information requires the careful selection of the units studied and careful measurement of each variable (Systematic Reviews).

4.2 Research Locale

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

The venue of the study was located at the three colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The respondents were 313 Education students enrolled in colleges/universities. Furthermore, the places of the respondents and the conduct of this study were located in the municipalities of

Governor Generoso, San Isidro, and Mati City, Davao Oriental, Philippines.

4.3 Population and Sample

The actual respondents of the study were 313 Education students in different majors from three different colleges/universities in Davao Oriental. The researcher used the Raosoft formula to find out the actual number of student respondents in this study.

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

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

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

4.4 Research Instrument

Three major research instruments have been highlighted in this study. The independent variable questionnaire was adapted from Az-Zahra, et al. on social literacy (165-166), the dependent variable questionnaire was adapted from Delfino on student engagement (4-6), and the mediating variable questionnaire was adapted from Basak on English speaking skills (110-113).

The Likert Scale was used as basis in describing the level of *social literacy, student engagement and English speaking skills.*

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

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

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

4.6 Statistical Tools

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

Mean and Frequency: This was used to determine the level of English speaking skills in connection with the relationship between social literacy and engagement of the Education students from the college/university.

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

Regression: This was employed to determine the domain of English speaking skills in connection

with the relationship between social literacy and engagement of the Education students in the college.

5. RESULTS

This section presents the result of the study that was conducted at the three colleges and universities in Davao Oriental among the 313 college students taking up Education.

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

Revealed in Table 2 is the level of engagement among the Education students of the colleges and university in Davao Oriental has a weighted mean of 3.84 with a standard deviation of .523 and a verbal interpretation of high. The results show that *cognitive engagement* has the highest mean value of 3.95 which is also described as high. On the other hand, *emotional engagement* has the lowest mean value of 3.75 which is also

described as high. Since 3.84 falls within the range of 3.40-4.19, this means that engagement is observed in many occasions by the education students.

In Table 3, the level of English speaking skills among education students from the colleges and university in Davao Oriental has an overall weighted mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of .546 described as high levels. Correspondingly, *fluency* has the lowest mean value of 3.41 and a standard deviation of .616, having the descriptive interpretation of high. All of the indicators got a mean score ranging from 3.41 to 3.46. This means that the English speaking skills are manifested by education students in many occasions.

In Table 4, there are the test results highlighting the relationship between social literacy and engagement, social literacy and English speaking skills, and English speaking skills and student engagement. The relationship is significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. On the other hand, the relationship is not significant if the p-value is more than 0.05. Reflected on the table below, social literacy and student engagement have an *r*-value of 0.825 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that there is a significant relationship between social literacy and student engagement. Social literacy is correlated with student engagement signifying a positive correlation, thus, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 1. Social literacy among the education students from the colleges and university in Davao Oriental

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Intellectual skills	3.45	.602	high
Social skills	4.16	.689	high
Cooperation skills	4.09	.713	high
Social attitudes and values	4.07	.577	high
Overall	**3.94**	**.538**	**high**

Table 2. Engagement among Education Students in the Context of Colleges and University in Davao Oriental

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Behavioral engagement	3.82	.575	high
Cognitive engagement	3.95	.591	high
Emotional engagement	3.75	.567	high
Overall	**3.84**	**.523**	**high**

Table 3. English Speaking Skills among the Education Students from the Colleges and University in Davao Oriental

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Grammatical accuracy	3.44	.621	high
Vocabulary	3.46	.599	high
Content	3.46	.592	high
Fluency	3.41	.616	high
Pronunciation	3.45	.767	high
Overall	**3.44**	**.546**	**high**

Table 4. Correlation analysis of the variables

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

Table 5. Regression analysis showing the influence of social literacy on student engagement, as mediated by English speaking skills

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

* p<0.05

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

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

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

The researcher affirmed that mediation is significant and there is partial mediation. The first regression - the independent variable (social literacy) - affects the dependent variable (student engagement) at a beta coefficient of 0.803 with a p-value of less than 0.05 and the relationship is significant. The second regression - the independent variable (social literacy) - affects the mediating variable (English speaking skills) at a beta coefficient of 0.641 with a p-value of 0.05, and the relationship is significant. Third regression -, the mediating variable (English speaking skills) - affects the dependent variable (student engagement) at a beta coefficient 0.154 with a p-value of less than 0.05, and the relationship is significant. Finally, the dependent variable (student engagement) is regressed on both the independent variable (social literacy) and the mediator (English speaking skills). Since the coefficient of social literacy has been reduced from 0.803 to 0.704, but still significant,
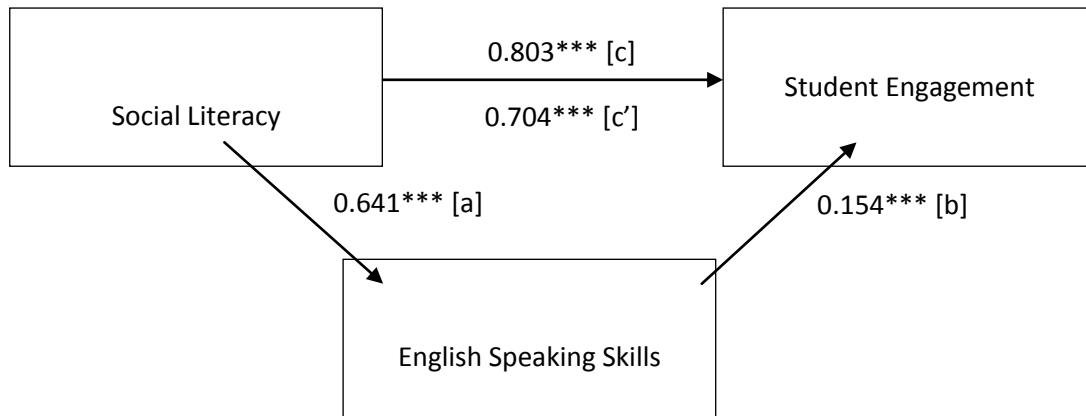
Fig. 2. Flow chart showing Mediation Analysis

the partial mediation of English speaking skills in the relationship between social literacy and student engagement is achieved.

5.1 Medgraph Showing the Variables of the Study

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

5.2 Effect Size Measures

Unstandardized Coefficients

Total:	.803
Direct:	.704
Indirect:	.641
Ratio Index:	.798

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

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

6. DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations based on the data related to the mediating role of English speaking skills in the relationship between social literacy and student engagement. The discussion is arranged according to what is set in the research objectives. The research objectives to be discussed are aimed to achieve the following: describe the level of social literacy; ascertain the level of student engagement; measure the level

of English speaking skills; establish the significance of the relationship between social literacy and student engagement, social literacy and English speaking skills, English speaking skills and student engagement; and, determine the significance of the mediation of English Speaking Skills in the relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement among the Education students from the colleges in Davao Oriental.

6.1 Social Literacy

The level of social literacy derived from the responses is high. This means that the level of social literacy is observed in many occasions. All of the indicators -, i.e., *intellectual skills; social skills; cooperation skills; and social attitudes and values,* were described as high. In Wilmms' study in 2001 about the impact of the youth's literacy, it was found out that the inequalities in literacy skills are associated with the educational background. This is supported by Megan Carnaghi's idea in 2009 stating that social literacy deals with the progress of intellectual skills, social skills, cooperation skills, and social attitudes and values. Carnaghi added that these factors fuel up the aspiration and capacity of the person to respond appropriately in the complexity of his/her surroundings. However, with regards to education, social literacy sticks to a goal in helping the students obtain the skills needed to understand the different social phenomena and the rapid changes in the modern society and how these factors affect their life in general.

On the other hand, in 2016, the study of Al-Zahra et al. [4] has concluded that social literacy relies on the existence of four factors namely the indicators of the *independent variable* presented in this study. The findings of the study show that there are differences in the literacy skills of the youth that are associated with the educational background of their parents. In addition, these differences are significantly higher in other countries where the study has been conducted. In other words, the discrepancies are believed to affect economic development for some reasons such as jobs that require technology advancements and other sectors that require the understanding of integrated disciplines/subjects, such as language and arithmetic (162). They even added that because of these reasons, the students' social literacy skills are interesting and important to be given attention through further study. This will also support not just the student's

cognitive function but also the abilities that reinforce and take into action what they learned and eventually take part and contribute to society (163).

Further, the high level of intellectual skills is aligned with Sastre-Riba's expression of high intellectual ability which demands good cognitive management. This is also according to a number of researchers (Steiner; Synder, Nietfeld, & Linnenbrink-Garcia) – who assume that intellectually gifted students show significant differences in regard to some intellectual abilities such as metacognitive regulation, and a remarkable ability to define ideas, focus on specific matter, balance situations, and efficiently solve problems (122).

Moreover, the high level of social skills is confirmed by Lake's findings in 2018, stating that these skills are important aspects of life and suggesting that students should get enrolled in schools in order to practice socialization and interaction with others. Lake also stressed that groups are great places to learn social skills because they usually provide direct instruction, modeling, role-playing, team-building activities, and positive reinforcement.

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

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

6.2 Student Engagement

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

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

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

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

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

6.3 English Speaking Skills

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

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

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

In view of this study, a high level of content in English speaking skills is shown. This is in congruence with the results from the study conducted by Samanhudi in 2013. The findings revealed that the students' major problems in mastering English speaking skills are the following: *grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, among others and psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence and*

nervousness (2). However, the findings of the study also revealed that *speaking with content program* should be established in order to prepare students to speak in English efficiently (11).

Undeniably, the high level of fluency in English speaking skills connotes good impression to students. Fluent English speakers are practically confident and most likely to be regarded as academically excellent students. This is in line with the study of Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi in 2015. The statistical analyses of the study revealed that there are significant differences in language proficiency and multilingualism that affects academic performance. In their study, a high level of proficiency skills in English speaking is evident (60).

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

6.4 The Significance of Relationship between Social Literacy and Student Engagement

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

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

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

6.5 The Significant Relationship between English Speaking Skills and Student Engagement

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

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

On the other hand, the study of Bagheri and Mohamadi Zenouzagh [14]) has indicated only limited engagement associated on the students'

involvement including "talking". In fact, their study found out that student engagement was associated with avoiding the use of L1 which focused on discourse rather than pause and silence (1).

6.6 Significant Relationship between Student Engagement and English Speaking Skills

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

The result of this study is parallel to the study of Alsubaie in 2022 [18] about distance learning due to the CoViD-19 pandemic and its impact on the students' learning. It was stated that flexible learning opportunities such as online distance learning is equivalent to face-to-face modality. It suggests that when a teacher knows how to utilize distance learning effectively, the learners' social literacy can be improved. Thus, this includes the digital literacy skill that is significant in learning the 21st century skills which educational institutions must have (6).

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

6.7 The Mediating Analysis of the Three Variables

The test of the mediating role revealed that it was significant but partial. Data were analyzed with the linear regression method as input to medgraph. It was indicated that the paths a (social literacy as the independent variable and English speaking skills as the mediating

variable), b (English speaking skills as the mediating variable and student engagement as the dependent variable), and c (social literacy as the independent variable and student engagement as the independent variable) were all significant. Thus the original role of English speaking skills had a direct effect on the relationship between social literacy and student engagement.

The result of this study was supported by Rijnhart, et al. in 2021[19] who states that mediation analysis is an important statistical method in research as it can be used to determine effective intervention components. According to them, traditional mediation analysis defines direct and indirect effects in terms of linear regression coefficients (1). In 2001, MacKinnon explained and identified the causal process that is fundamental in the relationship between two variables. The research stated that a mediating variable (MV) is called an intermediate because it comes in between the two variables. One important aspect of mediating variable is its close relationship with the theory and other mediating variables [20].

The theoretical framework of this study has supported and does not refute the findings of the relationship between social literacy, student engagement and English speaking skills. The theory on student involvement developed in 1984 links the relationship between English speaking skills [23-29]. According to Astin in 2014 [21], student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students (518). Frymier and Houser [22] proposed that oral participation in class plays a vital role in student engagement because teachers typically prefer students who participate orally in their classes (3).

In Western countries, educators view oral participation as means of engagement in class (8). As a result of their study, it was found out that engaging in oral participation makes students feel like they are learning more (16). Moreover, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's sociocultural theory links the relationship between social literacy and student engagement. As cited by Saul McLeod, Sociocultural theory views human development as a socially-

mediated process in which children or students acquire their values, beliefs and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of the society (2). Furthermore, Vygotsky stresses that through interaction within the society, intellectual abilities are more developed effectively and eventually become higher mental functions (3).

Lastly, Vygotsky also emphasized the theory on Social Constructivism, which functioned as the linking theory in the relationship between English speaking skills and social literacy [30-34]. Mielonen & Paterson articulated that Vygotsky believed that language is developed through the learner's interaction in a certain society and that language is developed and built on each other (17). Once the learner learns the language, this becomes knowledge that would eventually become literacy (18). In a research report commissioned by the Cambridge Assessment, a proposition about speaking and how it impacts literacy has been articulated that according to the National Literacy Trust, literacy is an integration of skills by definition such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Thus, a literate person is the one who communicates with others effectively and understands written information (8).

7. CONCLUSION

The data obtained for this study were analyzed and found to be adequate to support the following conclusions. The level of social literacy and student engagement is high. This means that social literacy and student engagement are observed on many occasions by college students taking up Education courses in the context of colleges and universities in Davao Oriental. Likewise, the level of English speaking skills as the mediator is high which also means that English speaking skills are observed among the Education students on many occasions.

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

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

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

The formation of students in their four-five year stay in college is critical. The administration as well as instructors, professors, and facilitators must work together in forming these future professionals. For instance, a policy such as "English only policy" which technically means

that the teacher or instructor requires students to speak only the English language inside the classroom is one way of encouraging students to practice their English speaking skills. Otherwise, they cannot interact with their classmates. It is important that students when participating in classroom activities express their thoughts and ideas well. Some students express thoughts and ideas through the use of the language they are comfortable using such as *Tagalog (Filipino language) or Bisaya/Mandaya (first language in Davao Oriental).*

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

Lastly, it is recommended to administrators intensely require the students who wish to take up Education courses to an *entrance interview* upon their entry to college/university in addition to the entrance examination - *yearly interviews* to assess their knowledge and mastery, and *exit interviews* in addition to mock board examination. This way, students will be encouraged to prepare and master their English speaking skills as early as high school, when they prepare to enter college.

Education courses are not simple. From these courses, we take educators of the future generation. Hence, this policy does not close doors to the students entering college who will take up Education courses and who may not possess great English speaking skills but it policy will condition them on the necessary requirements and standards that the Education system adheres to for the future global teachers.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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