

## Students' Speech Anxiety in Blended Learning

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**Abstract :** Public speaking anxiety (PSA), also known as speech anxiety, is innumerable persistent in any traditional communication classes, especially for students who learn English as a second language. The speech anxiety intensifies when communication skills assessments have taken their toll in an online or a remote mode of learning due to the perils of the COVID-19 virus. Both teachers and students have experienced vast ambiguity on how to realize a still effective way to teach and learn speaking skills amidst the pandemic. Communication skills assessments like public speaking, oral presentations, and student reporting have defined their new meaning using Google Meet, Zoom, and other online platforms. Though using such technologies has paved for more creative ways for students to acquire and develop communication skills, the effectiveness of using such assessment tools stands in question. This mixed method study aimed to determine the factors that affected the public speaking skills of students in a communication class, to probe on the assessment gaps in assessing speaking skills of students attending online classes vis-à-vis the implementation of remote and blended modalities of learning, and to recommend ways on how to address the public speaking anxieties of students in performing a speaking task online and to bridge the assessment gaps based on the outcome of the study in order to achieve a smooth segue from online to on-ground instructions maneuvering towards a much better post-pandemic academic milieu. Using a convergent parallel design, both quantitative and qualitative data were reconciled by probing on the public speaking anxiety of students and the potential assessment gaps encountered in an online English communication class under remote and blended learning. There were four phases in applying the convergent parallel design. The first phase was the data collection, where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using document reviews and focus group discussions. The second phase was data analysis, where quantitative data was treated using statistical testing, particularly frequency, percentage, and mean by using Microsoft Excel application and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19, and qualitative data was examined using thematic analysis. The third phase was the merging of data analysis results to amalgamate varying comparisons between desired learning competencies versus the actual learning competencies of students. Finally, the fourth phase was the interpretation of merged data that led to the findings that there was a significantly high percentage of students' public speaking anxiety whenever students would deliver speaking tasks online. There were also assessment gaps identified by comparing the desired learning competencies of the formative and alternative assessments implemented and the actual speaking performances of students that showed evidence that public speaking anxiety of students was not properly identified and processed.

**Keywords :** blended learning, communication skills assessment, public speaking anxiety, speech anxiety

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