



doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcrr.2020.802.002>

Determinants of Students' Speaking Skill Mastery in Ancucho Secondary School

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the determinants of students' speaking skill mastery in Ancucho secondary school grade 9. The study mainly depended on both quantitative and qualitative data which were collected from teachers and students through questionnaires, interview and classroom observation. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select sample population. The data results revealed that students speaking skill is found in its very low status due to absence of practice, encouragement and students low self -confidence. The major problem of students' speaking skill is fluency, accuracy and poor grammar and vocabulary. Based on this, the teachers were recommended to make speaking skill more practical by using variety of active learning methods.

Article Info

Accepted: 04 January 2020

Available Online: 20 February 2020

Keywords

Speaking, Proficiency, Fluency, Accuracy, Learning methods

Introduction

Background of the study

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Brown 1994). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking.

According to Choney and Gebherd (1996:169), speaking is one of the four productive skills in language teaching. It is defined as a process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal or oral form. According to Kathleen B-Egen (2014), speaking is at the heart of second language learning but has been somewhat ignored in teaching and testing for a number of logistical reasons of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Speaking seems

intuitively the most important aspect of a language as language learners are often referred to as 'speakers' of that target language (Ur 200:120). Davis and Pears (2000) explain that competent use of the language is acquired through extended and realistic use of the language.

Learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Learners must also acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange, in which many factors interact (Kang Shumine, 1997:8)

Speaking according to Gerald (2013) is related with the four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are interconnected because proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well - rounded communicator, but the ability to speak skillfully provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. However, students speaking skill in the concerned school is not

developing due to several factors. Therefore, in this study, the researchers attempted to assess the students' speaking skill to identify the factors affecting their speaking skill and to determine the effects of poor speaking skill in students' learning in order to suggest possible solutions that can improve students speaking skill in the target language.

Statement of the problem

Students' speaking skill proficiency plays vital roles to promote their learning. As Gereald (2013) stated that the capacity to put words together in a meaning way to reflect thoughts, opinions and feelings provides the speaker with the following important advantages. The ability to inform, persuade and direct business managers, educators, military leaders, lawyers and politicians among others seek to develop their speaking skills to such a level that they are transformed in to master communicators.

According to Kathleen (2000), it is arguably the most important skill for business and government personnel working in the field, yet it appears particularly vulnerable to attrition. Though speaking skill (communicative skills) are essential for the successful future career of students, students face challenges in this skill due to several hindering factors. Due to these hindering factors, students are not entrusted in practicing the skill either in the class room or outside the class room. In the concerned school, it seems that students' speaking skills are not developing, but rather getting deteriorated from time to time. Therefore, their attitude towards getting proficiency in the skill is becoming worse.

Bearing these in mind, this study attempts to answer some basic research questions.

Basic research Questions

1. What are the major factors that affect students' speaking skill?

Materials and Methods

Design of the study

This study used questionnaire, classroom observation and interview to collect data about the issue under discussion. Therefore, it was designed in the descriptive way of studying the stated problem.

Population / target group

The target group of this study was Ancucho Secondary School grade 9 students. The total number of students in this class is 150. The number of male students is 62 while the rest are females.

Sample Size and sampling technique

The simple size of this study is 30 students including both sexes. Sample of students was selected in the simple random sampling technique. The total number of teachers was 8, and they were all selected by using purposive sampling technique.

Sources of data

Primary data sources and secondary data sources were used to collect data for this study. Primary data sources are questionnaires prepared for teachers and students and interview conducted with the former. Additionally, classroom observation was used as the primary data sources. Secondary data sources are literatures written on the study issue such as various publications, magazines, news papers, books and unpublished maternal were used.

Data gathering instruments

Questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were the main data gathering instruments used to collect data about the issue understudy. Questionnaires were prepared for both teachers and students by including both open- ended and close ended items. In addition to this, interview was made with teachers and class room observation was also made.

Analysis and interpretation of the data

Data which were collected from the teachers and the students through questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively. Accordingly, they were tabulated in figures and then percentages were determined. But those data obtained from interview and class room observation were analyzed qualitatively and described in narration.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

The major factors that affect students speaking skill

Analysis and interpretation of the teachers' questionnaires

As seen in the above table, the majority 62.5% of respondents said that they rarely communicate with their students by speaking in English language while 25% and

12.5% of respondents said they sometimes and never communicate with students by speaking in English language in the classroom respectively. But none of the respondents said that they always speak in English language to their students in the classroom. This shows that majority of teachers do not speak in English language to communicate with their students in the classroom.

As seen in the above table, half of the students 50% of responded yes and the remaining 50% said no about helping students their students practice speaking skill in the class. This indicates that not all teachers always help students to practice speaking skill in the English class room.

As shown in the about table, the majority 62.5% of respondents said that their encouragement is not adequate to help students speak in English language while 37.5% said that they encourage students.

This shows that the degree of encouragement is not adequate to students to speak in English language.

As seen in the about table 80 % the respondents said the there is no adequate practical class during which students practice speaking skill but the rest 20% said yes.

This shows that there is no adequate practice class for students to practice in the class as the major factors that affect students speaking skill.

As indicated in the above table, 62.5% of respondents answered that students do not show their interest to speak in English language with the rest 37.5% said they show interest to speak in English language. This shows that majority of students have low interest to speak in English.

As seen in the about table, 50% and 25% of respondents answered that criticizing students when making mistakes and the teachers' poor speaking skill respectively hinder students from practicing speaking skill while 12.5% said that demoralizing and discouraging students attempts are the major factors that stem from teachers .

This shows that criticizing students when they make mistakes and the teachers' poor speaking skill are the major factors that hinder students from practicing the skill.

As seen in the about table, 37.5%, 25% and 25 % of respondents said that lack of practice, self confidence and poor speaking proficiency respectively have hindered students from developing their speaking skill, but only 12.5% said they fear of speaking in English language. These indicate that lack of practice, low self confidence and poor speaking skill hinder them from developing their speaking skill.

As seen in the above table, 37.5% equally and 12. 5% of respondents said the fluency, accuracy, grammar and vocabulary respectively are the major students speaking skill problem. From this one can conclude that in addition to grammar and vocabulary, fluency and accuracy are the major students speaking skill problems.

As seen in the above table, 75% of respondents rated their students speaking skill very low while the rest 25% rated their students speaking skill low. From this one can conclude that students speaking skill is found in between very low.

As seen in the above table, 90% of respondents said that their teacher does not encourage them to communicate by speaking in English language while the rest 10% said that the teachers do not encourage them to speak to them in English. Besides, in interview, about the factors that stem from the school and affect students speaking skill, the majority of interviewee said that absence of different language clubs that motivate students to develop their speaking skill and absence of competitions among students in debate etc. As well as lack of adequate audio materials are the major factors that hinder students from developing their speaking skill.

From this one can conclude that the teachers do not encourage students to communicate with them in English language.

As seen in the above table, the majority 93.3% of respondents said that they do not speak in English language with their classmates inside or outside the class room. But the rest 6.7% said that they speak in English with their class mates.

This shows that almost all students do not speak in English language with their class mates.

As indicated in table 3, 47% and 23.3% of respondents answered that they refuse to respond and they fear their classmate criticism respectively .The rest 19.7% and

10% said that their classmates demoralize and deride them repentantly.

From this one can conclude that peers' criticism and rejection as well as demoralizing affect students' speaking skill.

As seen in the above table, 93.3 said they do not give due responses to the teachers while the rest 6.7% said they give due responses.

This shows that almost all students do not give responses to their teachers when he/she tries to communicate with them in English language.

As seen in the above table, the majority 46.7% of students' said that they do not know how to respond. 30% and 13.3% as well as 10% responded that they fear get nervous and confused respectively.

This shows that the main reasons which hinder students from giving responses to their teachers when the teacher is trying to speak in English language is that they do not know how to respond in English. Fear and confusion are also additional factors. .

As seen in the about table, 80% of respondents said that they rarely try to speak in English with teacher and classmates while the rest who said some times and never each equally account 10%. From classroom observation data, it is also understood that students do not communicate each other in the classroom by speaking English language while working in groups, they discourage each other's command of the skill. The teachers too do not use variety of methods while teaching speaking skill.

These indicate that almost all students do not even attempt to speak in English language with their teachers and classmate.

As seen in the above table, 66.6% said that the major hindrances are low self confidence and absence of experience and practice while 20% and 13.4% of them said that fear of mistakes and fear of criticism respectively. In interview, regarding the teaching learning methodologies, the interviewed teachers agreed that poor implementation of student centered method affect students speaking skill. With regarding to students main reasons for fearing to speaking in English, the majority said that most of students do not have confidence in their accuracy and depend on grammar

rather than speaking freely. Due to poor speaking skill, students show deficiency in their listening skill.

From above information it is possible to conclude that in addition to fear of mistakes and criticism, low self -confidence and absence of experience and practice affect students from speaking in English language.

As seen in the above table, 50% of student respondents answered that absence of practice. While 33.3%, 10% and 6.7% said that poor grammar and vocabulary, lack of fluency and accuracy respectively. In class room observation, it is understood that the majority of students do not communicate with their teachers by speaking in English language but only few students rarely make attempts to give answers to their teachers by speaking in English language. And, the extent of help from teachers to allow students practice speaking skill is not adequate and encouraging. Therefore, almost all students show no interest and willing to communicate in English language.

From this one can conclude that absence of practice and vocabulary and are the major hindrance which affected students from developing their speaking skill.

As indicated in the above table, almost all 96.7% of respondents said that poor speaking skill affect their learning while only 3.3% responded that poor speaking skill does not have impact on their learning. On the other hand, interview shows that Poor speaking skill is the bottle-neck of listening skill because the two are closely inter connected. Students who have poor speaking skill face problems in identifying and recognizing the pronounced words and their sounds. Therefore, poor speaking skill hinder students listening skill.

Due to poor speaking skill, students listening skill is also affected because students become poor in recognizing intonation, sentence construction, articulation of word, varying modes as expressed in speech which in turn help them develop their speaking skill.

The majority of the respondents who were interviewed stated that poor speaking skill affect students other language skills and also affect their future education career or poor vocabulary and grammar. From this one can say that poor speaking skill affect the students learning (language learning). As indicated that 96.7% of respondents said that they don't have a good command of speaking skill but only 3.3% said I have a good command of the skill. This shows that almost all students don't have a good command of speaking skill as opposed to their grade level.

Table.1 The frequency of communicating with students by speaking in English language

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondents	%
1	How often do you communicate with your students by speaking in English language	Always	-	-
		Sometimes	2	25%
		Rarely	5	62.5%
		Never	1	12.5%
		Total	8	100%

Table.2 Regarding students' practice of speaking skill

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
2	Do you always help your students practice speaking skill in English language class?	Yes	4	50%
		No	4	50%
		Total	8	100%

Table.3 The adequacy of encouragement gives to students

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
3	Do you encourage your students to adequately practice English language speaking in the class?	Yes	3	37%
		No	5	62.5%
		Total	8	100%

Table.4 The availability of adequate practical class

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
4	Is there adequate practical class during which students' practices speaking skill?	Yes	2	20%
		No	6	80%
		Total	8	100%

Table.5 Students' interest to speak in English language

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
5	Do your students show you interest to speak in English language with you?	Yes	3	37.5%
		No	5	62.5%
		Total	8	100%

Table.6 Factors affecting students speaking skill on the part of teachers

No	Item:- what is the major factor that hinder students from practicing speaking skill on the part of teachers	Frequency		
		Alternatives	Number of respondents	%
1	The teachers' poor speaking skill	2	25%	
2	Demoralizing students when they make errors	1	12.5%	
3	Criticizing students when making mistakes	4	50%	
4	Discouraging students' attempts	1	12.5%	
	Total	8	100%	

Table.7 Factors hindering students from developing speaking skill

No	Item7, what do you think that hinders students from developing their speaking skill	Frequency		
		Alternatives	Number of respondents	%
1	Low self confidence	2	25%	
2	Fear of speaking in English language	1	12.5%	
3	Lack of practice	3	37.5%	
4	Poor speaking proficiency	2	25%	
	Total	8	100%	

Table.8 Students' major speaking skill problem

No	Item: what is students majors pecking skill problem?	Frequency		
		Alternatives	Number of respondents	%
1	Fluency	3	35%	
2	Accuracy	3	37.5%	
3	Grammar	1	12.5%	
4	Vocabulary	1	12.5%	
	Total	8	100%	

Table.9 Students speaking skill rate

No	Items: how do you rate your students speaking skill?	Frequency	
		Number of respondents	%
1	Very low	6	75%
2	Low	2	25%
3	Medium	-	-
4	High	-	-
	Total	8	100%

Analysis of the students' questionnaires

Table.1 Teachers' encouragement to students

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
1	Does your teacher encourage you to communicate by speaking in English language?	Yes	3	10%
		No	27	90%
		Total	30	100%

Table.2 Speaking in English language to classmates

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
2	Do you speak in English language with your class mates either in the classroom or outside the class room	Yes	2	6.7%
		No	28	93.3%
		Total	30	100%

Table.3 Reasons not to speak in English language to classmates

No	Item 3 why don't you speak to your classmates in English language?	Frequency	
		Number of respondents	%
1	Fear of their criticism	7	23.3%
2	They demoralize me	6	19.7%
3	They refuse to respond	14	47%
4	The deride me	3	10%
	Total	30	100%

Table.4 Student's responses to their teacher

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
4	Do you give responses to our teacher when he/she speaks to you in English language?	Yes	2	6.7%
		No	28	93.3%
		Total	30	100%

Table.5 Reasons not to responses to teacher

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
5	Why do not you give due responses to your teacher when he / she communicates to you by speaking in English language?	Because, I don't know how to respond	14	46.7%
		I fear	9	30.3%
		I get nervous	4	13.3%
		I am confused soon	3	10%
		Total	30	100%

Table.6 The frequency of speaking in English language

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
6	How often do you try to speak in English language with teacher or with your class mates	Always	-	-
		Sometimes	3	10%
		rarely	24	80%
		Never	3	10%
		Total	30	100%

Table.7 The major factor hindering students from speaking in English language

No	item : 7 factors hindering students from speaking in English language	Frequency	
		Number of respondents	%
1	Low self confidence	10	33.3%
2	Fear of mistakes	6	20%
3	Fear of criticism	4	13.4%
4	Absence of experience and practice	10	33.3%
	Total	30	100%

Table.8 Hindrances that affect students' speaking skill from development

No	Item 8: what are the major factors that hinder your speaking skill from developing?	Frequency	
		Number of respondents	%
1	Absence of practice	15	50%
2	Lack of fluency	2	6.7%
3	Lack of accuracy	3	10%
4	Poor grammar and vocabulary	10	33.3%
	Total	30	100%

Table.9 The effects of poor speaking skill

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
4	Do poor speaking skill have effects on your learning language learning	Yes	29	96.7%
		No	1	3.3%
		Total	30	100%

Table.10 The quality of speaking skill

No	Item	Alternatives	Number of respondent	%
10	Do you think that you have a good a command of speaking skill?	Yes	1	3.3%
		No	29	96.7%
		Total	30	100%

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary

This study was conducted on the determinants of students' speaking skill mastery and conducted in southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples' regional state in Wolata Zone Damote Sore Woreda in Ancucho Secondary School in grade 9 . In the study, the data was collected by using questionnaires and classroom observation as well as interview.

Literature about the study issue was discussed form different angles .Then the researcher selected 30 students

and 8 teachers as sample population in the randomized and purposive sampling techniques respectively.

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Then based on the findings obtained from the collected data, conclusions were given. Then, recommendations were proposed.

Based on the findings obtained from the collected data, the following conclusions were made.

- Students speaking skill is found at very low level as opposed to their grade level.

- Lack of practice, encouragement and low self confidence affect students' speaking skill.
- The teachers' poor speaking skill, classmates' and teachers' criticism, demoralizing and discouraging of students' attempts affect their speaking skill.
- Fluency and accuracy as well as poor grammar and vocabulary are the factors contributing to their poor speaking skill.

Recommendations

According to the research findings, the researcher proposed the following suggestions:

Teachers should use a variety of teaching learning methods while teaching speaking skill

They should give adequate practical sessions where by students can practice speaking skill.

Teachers should encourage and motivate students to speak in English language by initiating different topics which enable students to debate and act out different dialogues and play.

Students should be provided with adequate chances to practice their speaking skill. Time should be given for students to learn practically.

The teachers should give more emphasis to teach speaking skill in integrated way with other skills.

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How to cite this article:

Abraham Kebede and Wondwosen T. Michael. 2020. Determinants of Students' Speaking Skill Mastery in Ancucho Secondary School. *Int.J.Curr.Res.Aca.Rev.* 8(2), 6-15.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcrar.2020.802.002>