

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF SECOND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

As English is the Philippines Second Language, the curriculum provides adequate opportunities in order for the students to have an effective and efficient communication but despite all these, the students have to improve their skills wherein it was stated that there are factors that affect and hinder them to learn the second language effectively. This mixed-method survey research aimed to identify and evaluate the factors that greatly affect the speaking skill of students wherein it involved 39 Grade 7 students and nine Junior High school English teachers with the different perceptions of the two groups of participants. It was revealed that a typical English teacher is female, 41 years old, with Master's units with 6 to 10 experience in teaching. The common student-respondent was female and is studying English for about 5 to 7 years. The teachers aimed to develop the speaking skill of the students by giving them a variety of speaking tasks with a definite time duration wherein the students are trained to correct their own grammatical errors which can be further developed through the immediate and constructive feedback from their teachers. Meanwhile, the students have poor vocabulary so they sometimes communicate using English as the medium and they know that it is very significant in their future jobs especially in communication. If they are exposed in an unannounced speaking activity, it was revealed that they are pressured so they try to prepare possible responses in advance. Furthermore, the teachers agreed that the students are motivated to learn English in their class but some were anxious while performing speaking activities. Lastly, the teachers revealed that the students were average as many can use English in conversing their ideas but still they need more practice. The main factor that affects students' speaking skills is the affective factor such as the shyness to speak the English language and the fear of committing mistakes while their speaking performance. The study recommends that teachers may encourage the students to speak in class by giving more time for speaking practices for students to be confident so they can handle on the spot speaking performance. Teachers should give genuine feedbacks through euphemism to avoid the students' discouragement.

Keywords: second language, speaking skill, factors affecting speaking skills, speaking problems, grade 7 language learners, mixed-method survey, affective factor

INTRODUCTION

The American colonization in the Philippines became an opportunity of the Philippines' Westernization of the native Filipinos. It led to the introduction of the English language which allowed Filipinos to experience formal education.

In the Philippines, most of the subjects were taught in English and it also became the second language. Unfortunately, though it is widely used there are still difficulties and problems that students encountered. On the current Philippine Educational system teaching, it became part of the curriculum. Thus, it considered as the automatic language among Filipinos (Generales, Medina & Separa, 2015)

According to Swarthout (n.d), great communication skills are your ticket to success in the academics and in the business world. Meanwhile, students especially who are in the grade school level are anxious and are frightened to converse or express their own thoughts using the English language which has become the main problem of the English teachers.

In the four macro skills, speaking is considered as the most important. In general, people concentrate upon this skill because it represents and tells someone's knowledge about the language he/she knows. The ability to use it effectively and accurately in communication is the major goal of all English language teaching process and that should be incorporated with the learners and give them these abilities (Shteiwi & Hamuda, 2016).

Though English becomes Philippines' second language there are factors that hinder students to effectively used the English language, they tend to be uncomfortable in using the second language fluently instead they use it in more colloquial way rather than formal.

This study is focused on analyzing the factors that affects the speaking skills of students particularly in grade 7 level who were enrolled in different special programs in the current curriculum through the perspectives of teachers and students.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-method research design that focused on the analysis of the factors that affects the speaking skill of Grade 7 students in English. It made use of the survey type questionnaire to evaluate the factors and problems of students in speaking skills using English. The participants of this study were teachers and students of Castillejos National High School wherein nine junior high school English teacher were asked to answer the questionnaire and 39 random grade 7 students who were all enrolled in special programs such as Special Program for Arts, Special Programs for Sports and Special Program for Foreign language. The researcher used the Stratified Random Sampling. This method involves the division of population into smaller group known as strata. This is formed based on the shared attributes or characteristics of the respondents.

The instrument which was used in this study is a modified survey questionnaire from the study of Tuan and Mai in 2015. It consisted of two parts. The first part consists of the demographic profile of the participants which included their sex, age, educational attainment, and length of years teaching English. The demographic profile students consist of sex, and length of years learning English. The second part consist of the factors affecting students' speaking performance and speaking problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Teachers

The profile of teachers was determined to give more comprehensive background of their sex, age, educational attainment and length of years teaching English.

Table 1. Frequency and Percent Distribution of Teacher by Sex, Age, Educational Attainment, and length of years teaching English (n=9)

Profile	Frequency	Percent
1. Sex		
Male	1	11.11
Female	8	88.88
Total	9	100
2. Age		
26-30	1	11.11
31- 35	1	11.11
41 above	7	77.77
Total	9	100
3. Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	5	55.55
Master's Degree	4	44.44
Total	9	100
4. Length of Years Teaching English		
6-10	4	44.44
11-15	1	11.11
16 above	4	44.44
Total	9	100

As shown in table 1, 8 or 88.88 percent of the teachers were female, 77.77 or 7 out of nine teachers were 41 and above years old. 1 or 11.11 percent, aged 31 to 35 years old and among the nine teacher-participants 4 or 44.44 percent of them were able to take their master's degree. In the length of teaching English, 4 or 44.44 percent of them were 6 to 10 years in teaching English while only 1 or 11.11 percent is in 11 to 15 years in teaching English.

Profile of Students

The profile of students was determined to give a more comprehensive background of their sex and length of years learning English.

Table 2. Frequency and Percent Distribution of Students by Sex and length of years learning English (n=39)

Profile	Frequency	Percent
1. Sex		
Male	18	46.15
Female	21	53.85
Total	39	100
2. Length of Years Learning English		
2-4	1	2.56
5-7	22	56.41
More than 7	16	41.02
Total	39	100

Table 2 shows that, among the 39 student-participants, 18 or 46.15 percent of them were male while 22 or 56.41 percent of them were learning English for 5 to 7 years. 16 or 41 percent of them were learning English for more than 7 years while only 1 or 2.56 percent of them was learning the language for 2 to 4 years.

Speaking Performance of students based from teachers' Perception

Performance Condition of students in Speaking. Figure 1 presents the percentage of teachers who answered either “yes” or “no” in the performance condition of the students in speaking class. How would you describe the performance condition in speaking class?

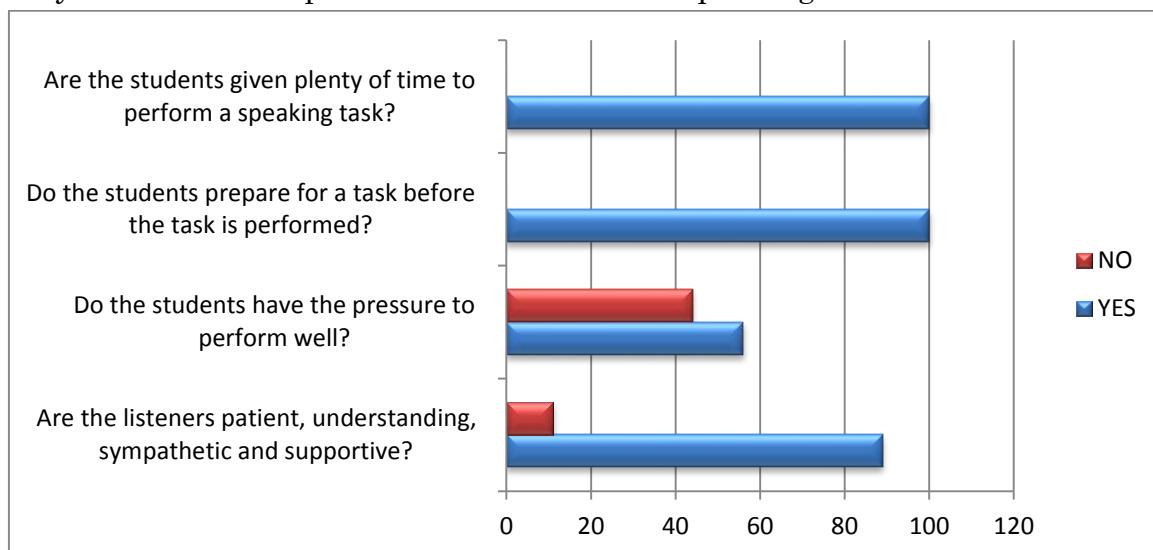


Figure 1. Performance Condition of students according to Teachers' Perception

Nine teachers were asked about the performance condition of students and they all agreed that students were given plenty of time to perform a speaking task as it gets 100% or 9 out 9 said “yes”. The same result in the statement “do students prepare for a task before the task is performed.” It also gets 100% as per all teachers said “yes”. Meanwhile, 89% or 8 teachers marked “yes” in the statement “are the listeners patient, understanding, sympathetic and supportive”. Only 11% or 1 teacher marked “no” in the same statement mentioned. Furthermore, 56% or 5 teachers marked “yes” in the statement “do students have the pressure to perform well” and 44% said “no” in the same statement. According to Cambridge University Press (2017), it was suggested that approximately 25 percent of classroom time should be devoted to communicative speaking tasks.

Therefore, giving at least 25 minutes of the class hour daily would give students enough practice in their speaking skill using the English language.

Teachers' reaction when students make mistakes. Table 3 presents the frequency and percent distribution of teacher-respondents by their reaction when students omitted mistakes in oral recitation.

Table 3. Frequency and percent Distribution of Teachers' Reaction when students make mistakes

Teachers' Reaction	Frequency	Percent
Keep quiet, smile and encourage them to go on their task.	5	23%
Stop them and correct their mistakes.	1	4%
Get annoyed when students keep making mistakes.	3	14%
If students cannot think of what to say, you may prompt them forwards.	4	18%
Watch, listen to students and write down points to give feedback afterwards.	9	41%
Total	22	100%

As shown in table 3, 9 or 41% of teachers choose “watch, listen to students and write down points to give feedback afterwards.” This factor gets the highest percentage among the others. The importance of feedbacks helps students to realize and evaluate their mistake in a certain speaking task and by that teachers should also consider that factors that may affect the student if they receive the feedback. According to Harmer (1991), if the teacher corrected the mistakes of the student, the teacher should be careful of the words he/she will use because the conversational flow as well as the purpose of the speaking activity would be destroyed.

Speaking performance of students based from students' perception

Degree of likeness to Speak English in class. Table 4 presents the frequency and percent distribution of students by the how much they like speaking English in class.

Table 4. Frequency and percent distribution of student by how much they like speaking English in Class

Degree of how much they like speaking English	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	13	33%
Little	25	64%
Not at All	1	3%
Total	39	100%

Students tend to like speaking English in class slightly or little as shown in the table 12 and figure 7 as it gets 64% or 25 students agreed that they like speaking in English slightly. 33% or 13 students like speaking English very much while 3% or 1 student marked “not at all” for they tend to stick speaking the native language in class.

Speaking English outside the Class. Table 5 presents the frequency and percent distribution of student-participants by the frequency to practice using English outside the class.

Table 5. Frequency and percent distribution of student by the number of times they practice to use English outside the class.

Frequency of Practicing English Outside the class	Frequency	Percent
Always	1	3%
Usually	8	21%
Sometimes	27	69%
Rarely	3	7%
Never	0	0
Total	39	100%

Among 39 students 69% or 27 marked “sometimes” as they tend to use or practice speaking English sometimes or occasionally. However, 21% or 8 students marked “usually” as they practice very minimal. 7% or 3, marked “rarely” as they practice it infrequently. 3% marked “always” as the student tend to like to use and practice it even outside the class. And there is no student marked never as there were times they also use or practice English even outside the class.

Importance of English in students' future job. Table 6 is the frequency and percent distribution of student-respondents by the necessity to use English in their future jobs

Table 6. Frequency and Percent distribution of student by the necessity to use English in their future jobs.

Degree of Necessity	Frequency	Percent
Very Necessary	13	33%
Necessary	16	41%
Slightly Necessary	10	26%
Unnecessary	0	0
Very Unnecessary	0	0
Total	39	100%

As the table 14 and figure 9 shows, 41% of students marked “necessary”, for they thought that English is required for their future jobs. 33% or 13 student thought that speaking English is very necessary for their future job. 26% or 10 of students thought that English is slightly necessary to their future jobs. And with the same result, none of the students thought that English is unnecessary for their future jobs.

Performance Condition in Speaking Class. Figure 2 presents the percentage of students who answered either “yes” or “no” in the performance condition in speaking class.

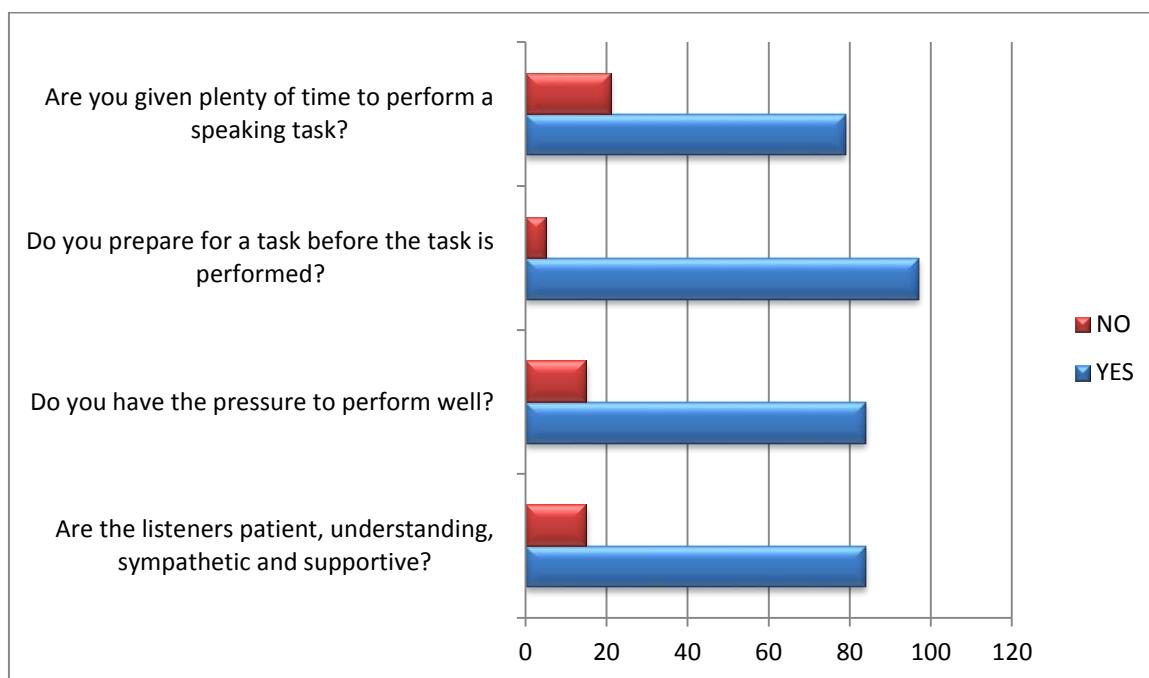


Figure 2. Performance conditions of students according to their perception

39 students were asked about their performance condition in class and 97% or 38 out of 39 students agreed that they prepare for the task before they would perform it. And only 3% or 1 out of 39 students do not agree in preparing the task before they would perform it. On the other hand, 84% of students agreed that they are pressured to perform well in speaking class and only 15% said “no” in the statement “do you have the pressure to perform well”. With the same result as the statement “are the listener patient, understanding, sympathetic and supportive” as it also gets 84% said “yes” and 15% said “no”. Student tends to prepare first before the speaking task as aligned to Nation and Newton’s (2009) types of performance condition model as the second type of performance condition emphasized “planning” makes the student anxious thus they prepare to lessen the fear of criticism.

Frequency of teachers correcting students’ mistake while performing oral task. Table 7 presents the frequency and percent distribution of student-respondents by the times their teacher corrected their mistake in oral task.

Table 7. Frequency and Percentage distribution of student by the times their teacher correct their mistake in oral task.

Frequency of Teachers correcting students’ mistake	Frequency	Percent
Always	17	43%
Often	1	3%
Sometimes	15	38%
Rarely	5	13%
Never	1	3%
Total	39	100%

As shown in table , 43% or 17 students agreed that teachers correct their mistake “always” during their oral performance while “never” and “often” shared with the same result of 3% or 1 student said that he/she is constantly corrected and or the student never experienced to be corrected by their teacher.

Perception of the Respondents in Students’ Speaking Skill

Teachers’ Perception

Students during Speaking Class. Table 8 is the frequency and percent distribution of students during their speaking class.

Table 8 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Students in speaking class

Students during speaking class	Frequency	Percentage
Motivated	5	56%
Anxious	3	33%
Confident	1	11%
Others	0	0%
Total	9	100%

56% or 5 teachers agreed that their students were motivated to learn English in their class. However, 33% or 3 teachers marked “anxious” as their student were nervous when they are in speaking class. 11% or 1 teacher marked “confident”. This shows that an amount of student that marked that they are motivated to learn the target language tend to have an effect on their pursuing career or future jobs.

Students’ Perception

Perception of Students in Speaking class. Table 9 the frequency and percent distribution of student-respondents by their perception of feeling during English class.

Table 9 Frequency and Percentage distribution of student by their perception during English class

Perception of Students	Frequency	Percent
Motivated	17	44%
Anxious	12	31%
Confident	7	18%
Other (Perception)	3	7%
Total	39	100%

44% or 17 students were motivated to learn English and motivated to used it, as shown in the table 15 and figure 11 while 31% or 13 students were anxious about speaking English in class. 18% or 7 students marked that they are confident and 7% or 3 students have other perception or feelings towards speaking in class.

Evaluation of students' Speaking Skills according to Teachers' Perception. Table 10 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of students during their speaking class.

Table 10 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of students by their evaluation of their speaking skill

Evaluation of Students	Frequency	Percentage
Very Bad	0	0
Bad	0	0
Average	7	78%
Good	2	22%
Very Good	0	0
Total	9	100%

As shown in the table 8 and figure 3, 78% or 7 teachers agreed that their students were on the average as some can speak or understand English language but they are not that fluent. Only 22% or 2 teachers agreed that their students have good speaking skill us. Lastly, there is no teacher who marked “very good”, “bad”, and “very bad”. As Philippines considered one of the largest English-speaking country in Asia Filipinos tend to considered their ability to converse in English as “average” English speakers (Cabigon, 2015). In addition, proficiency in the language is also one of the Philippines’ strengths, but when it comes to fluidity of the language, native Filipino students especially in grade school level were considered as “average” language speakers because they understand well enough in the language but they are not fluent when speaking it.

Evaluation of Students' Speaking Skill according to their Perception. Table 11 is the frequency and percent distribution of student-respondents by their evaluation of their speaking skill.

Table 11. Frequency and Percent distribution of Students by the evaluation of their speaking skills

Evaluation of Students	Frequency	Percentage
Very Bad	0	0
Bad	0	0
Average	21	54%
Good	17	43%
Very Good	1	3%
Total	39	100%

54% or 21% of the students thought that they have average speaking skill. However, 43 % or 17 students marked “good” or somewhat high but not excellent. It shows that the speaking skill of the second English language learners is in the average level or it is considered normal or usual.

Factors Affecting Students' Speaking Performance

Teachers' Perception

Factors that affect students' performance. Presented in table 12 is the frequency and percentage distribution of teacher-respondents according to their opinion in factors that affect the students' speaking performance.

Table 12. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of teachers' answer by the factor that affects students' speaking performance

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Time for preparation	3	12%
Pressure to perform well	3	12%
Listeners' support	2	8%
Motivation to speak	1	4%
Confidence	6	23%
Anxiety	3	12%
Topical knowledge	3	12%
Listening ability	0	0
Feedback during speaking activities	3	12%
Time allowed to perform a speaking task	1	3%
Other reason (lack of expertise on grammar)	1	3%
total	26	100%

23% or 6 out of 9 teachers agreed that "confidence" is the main factor that affects the students' speaking skills. They tend to know what to answer but they lack of confidence to verbalize it in English. Furthermore, with the same percentage result, 12% or 3 out of 9 teacher-respondents answered that the factors "time for preparation", "pressure to perform well", "anxiety", "topical knowledge" and feedback during speaking activities is the next factors that affects the speaking performance of students in class.

Students would probably lose their confidence during speaking class when they are aware that they are not good in speaking so they would rather keep silent while others do talking showing that the students are lack of confidence to communicate (Al Nakhlah, 2015).

Student's Perception

Factors that Affects Students' Speaking Performance. Table 13 is the frequency and percent distribution of teacher-respondents according to their opinion in factors that affect the students' speaking performance.

Table 13. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of students by the factors that affects their speaking skill

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Time for preparation	14	11%
Pressure to perform well	28	21%
Listeners' support	20	15%
Motivation to speak	12	9%
Confidence	20	15%
Anxiety	3	2%
Topical knowledge	14	11%
Listening ability	14	11%
Time allowed to perform a speaking task	7	5%
Other factors	1	1%
Total	131	100%

As shown in figure 14, 21% or 28 out of 39 students thought that pressure to perform well is the main factor that affect their speaking performance. 15% or 20 out of 39 students thought that confidence or lack of confidence in speaking class is the second factor that affects their speaking performance the same result as listener support. 11% or 14 out of 39 student thought that time for preparation, topical knowledge and listening ability as the next factors that affect their speaking performance as these three factor shared the same result. 9% or 12 students agreed that motivation to speak is the next factor. 5% or 7 students choose time allowed to perform in speaking task. 2% or 3 students marked anxiety as a factor and lastly 1 % or 1 student marked other factor but it is not specified.

Problems Encountered by the Students in Speaking Class (Teachers' Perception) Table 14 is the frequency and percent distribution of teacher-respondents by the problems encountered by their students in speaking English.

Table 14 Frequency and percentage distribution of teachers' answer by the Problems Encountered by students

Problems Encountered by students	Frequency	Percent
They are worried about making mistakes.	8	30%
They are fearful of criticism or losing face.	7	26%
They cannot think of anything to say.	1	4%
They have no motive to express themselves.	2	7%
They speak very little or not at all.	1	4%
They use Filipino.	1	4%
They are shy.	7	26%
total	27	100%

As shown in table 11 and figure 6, 30% or 8 teachers chose the statement “they are worried in making mistake” as one of the main problems encountered by students in speaking English in class. Next is the statement “they are fearful of criticism or losing face” as it gets 26% or 7 out of 8 teachers choose this as the next problem that students encountered the same result in the statement “they are shy” as it also get 26% or 7.

Problems Encountered by the Students in Speaking Class (Students' Perception) Presented in table 15 is the frequency and percentage distribution of student-respondents by the problems they encountered in speaking skills.

Table 15. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of students by the problems they encountered in speaking skills.

Problems Encountered by students	Frequency	Percentage
They are worried about making mistakes.	31	36%
They are fearful of criticism or losing face.	8	9%
They cannot think of anything to say.	5	6%
They have no motivation to express themselves.	4	5%
They speak very little or not at all.	5	6%
They use Filipino.	8	9%
They are shy.	26	30%
total	87	100%

As the figure shown, the most common problem that students encountered is that they are worried about making mistake with 36% or 31 out of 39 marked the latter as their problem. However, 30% or 26 students marked that they are shy in speaking English during speaking performance. 9% or 8 student agreed that they are fearful of criticism or losing face during the speaking class the same result as the problem that they use Filipino instead of English during the speaking class. 6% or 5 student agreed that they cannot think of anything to say the same result as the problem that they speak very little or not at all during speaking class. Lastly, 5% or 4 students marked that they have no motivation to express themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

From the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions are derived:

1. Most of the teacher-participants were females. Majority of them aged 41 and above years old. Only four of them already finished their master's degree. And four of them were 6 to 10 years in teaching and four teachers were already 16 and above in the service.

2. Most of the students-participant were females. Majority of them were learning English for about 5 to 7 years.
3. Teachers gave plenty of time for students to perform speaking tasks. They all agreed that students prepare first before they perform. They also agreed that the listeners were patient, understanding, sympathetic and supportive. When students make mistakes during the speaking performance, the teacher watch or listen to them and write down points to give feedbacks afterwards.
4. Students tend to prepare first before performing the speaking task. They cannot perform "impromptu" or on the spot. The degree of likeness of students to speak English in speaking class were just "little" but they were motivated to learn English. Learning English is also necessary for students' future job. Students also said that their teacher correct them occasionally or sometimes.
5. Both of the respondents agreed that students were motivated to learn English.
6. Both of the respondents shared the same perception that students were on the average range when it comes to their speaking skill or ability.
7. Affective factor is the main factor that affects students' speaking skill. Confidence or lack of confidence and pressure to perform well is the main concern. Based on the teachers' perception, it is the lack of confidence of most students to speak English while the students said it is pressure to perform well. Both of the said factor are under the affective factor.
8. Both of the respondents agreed that students were worried of making mistakes while performing the speaking task. However, students also said that they were shy to speak English in class.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings and conclusions, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1. The teacher should give more time for the students to practice and enhance their confidence in speaking English so that students can handle on the spot speaking performance.
2. Teachers should encourage students to speak English in class, by giving genuine evaluation of their mistakes but be careful to the words they would use for student to be not discouraged.
3. Students were worried of making mistakes during speaking performance, with this teachers should encourage the listener to be supportive and sympathetic as well to help each of them to improve their speaking skills. Giving feedback is necessary to evaluate students' speaking skill.
4. With the use of nice words and praises or reward system such as additional point for their recitation the student would be encouraged to participate in the speaking activities in the class.
5. To avoid students to be fearful or worried when it comes to speaking performance, teachers should also allow students to evaluate themselves and their classmates through constructive criticism.

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