

FACTORS AFFECTING THE ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH OF THE FOURTH YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Recognizing oral communication as a critical component of functional literacy. This study identifies the extent of the factors on the oral communication skills in English of fourth-year education students at a private Catholic university during the Academic Year 2020-2021 and analyzes the relationship between these factors and their proficiency levels. A descriptive research design was employed, involving thirty-seven (37) students. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson product-moment correlation. Results indicate that the overall oral communication skill of students was rated as "Good," with strengths in addressing questions and clear pronunciation. However, areas like vocabulary, confidence, and grammatical accuracy require improvement. While factors such as practice, self-confidence, vocabulary, and school environment were identified as significantly affecting communication skills. Despite these findings, no significant relationship was found between the overall level of oral communication skills and the extent of factors affecting the students' communication skills. The study concludes that while students demonstrate adequate communication skills, targeted interventions are essential to address weaknesses. Recommendations include integrating vocabulary-building activities, confidence-boosting exercises, and frequent opportunities for practical language use both inside and outside the classroom to enhance proficiency.

Keywords: oral communication skills, English, education, private catholic university

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Using a language is more important than just knowing about it because “there is no point knowing a lot about a language if you don’t use it.” (Scrivener, 2005). Oral communication skill is an important aspect of functional literacy. UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2018) defines functional literacy as “the capacity of a person to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development.”

Looking at the national context, Philippines is a country where English is used as a second language. This makes it challenging for the language learners to use the English language in the native-like fluency level. This is evidenced by the different current state of the quality of English language performance of the Philippines. Cabigon (2015) mentioned, in his article in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, that there is “a decline in the quality of English in the Philippines

and the growing number of unfilled jobs in various industries that require certain levels of English communication skills.” Additionally, a survey conducted by the Hopkins International partners, the official representative to the group called Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) shows that students and teachers in the Philippines are lagging in their English proficiency. It was pointed out that one of the reasons could be that teachers are using the Filipino language as a medium of instruction in teaching the English subject.

This Private Catholic University is predominantly an English-speaking university. However, most communication outside the classroom uses the lingua franca or the native language. The native language is usually used for social interactions. With this, students do not competently apply the English language for a larger context where it must be used. The goal of English language teaching and learning is to encourage learners to use English for meaningful and effective communication, not only inside but also outside the classroom. (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Further, one of the important components of the English language is the oral communication skills of the speakers. With this skill, learners will be able to use the language for different communicative transactions. Empirically, most students are not competitively fluent in using the English language for speaking purposes.

Since this is a recurring problem of the English language education and learning in the Philippines, it is then necessary to consider the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the learners especially so that the respondents of this study will be the fourth-year education students which will later soon be future educators.

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the fourth year Education students in a Private Catholic University during the Academic Year 2020-2021.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the level of the oral communication skills in English of the students?
2. What is the extent of the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the students in terms of:
 - 2.1 Practice Factor
 - 2.2 Self Confidence Factor
 - 2.3 Reading Factor
 - 2.4 Vocabulary Factor
 - 2.5 Television-Motion Picture and Technology Factor
 - 2.6 School and Teacher Factor
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of the oral communication skills in English and the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the students?

1.2 Literature Review

Language plays an important role in human life as it is one of the necessities of social life and it is individuals' means to express their needs. At present, English occupies an important status as one of the most widespread languages in the world, and one of the main ways of human communication (Alzahni, 2019). Since English communication is everywhere and one of the most commonly use means of communication will most likely be of help to further study the English communication skills of our future educators, that by any means this skill will be very much helpful for them.

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 210 of the Commission of Higher Education, states that: WHEREAS, Sec. 7, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution provides that for purposes of communication and instruction, the official language of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English;

WHEREAS, there is a need to develop the aptitude, competence and proficiency of our students in the English language to maintain and improve their competitive edge in emerging and fast-growing local and international industries, particularly in the area of Information and Communications Technology [ICT];

Therefore, we can see how the educational sector gave us legal basis of support to the emerging use of the English language, as they mentioned the need to maintain and improvement of the aptitude, competence and proficiency of the students with regards to the English Language. Similarly, the goal of this study is to look for interventions on how to enhance oral communication skills by looking at the factors which may affect the said skill.

According to Nassiri and Gilakjani (2016), human communication is a complex process. People need communication when they want to say something and transmit information. Speakers use communication when they are going to inform someone about something. Speakers apply language according to their own goals.

Nassiri and Gilakjani (2016) expressed that speaking is of great significance for the people interaction where they speak everywhere and every day. Speaking is the way of communicating ideas and messages orally. Therefore, we can see in here how important oral communication skills in English is. This two study points out that oral communication skills is very important in transmitting information, and in relation to the chosen respondents which are the future educators this would really be of great help for them and of the institution as well.

1.3 Oral Communication

Oral communication is essential for the successful future career of students. In a competitive world, communication skills are a crucial part of foreign language which we can share our ideas and thoughts with other people, and this skill demonstrates the level of English that students have when they implemented the foreign language. When the oral communication is effective, both the student and the teacher benefit. Communication makes learning easier, helps students achieve goals, increases opportunities for expanded learning, strengthens the connection between student and teacher, and create confident between them. Confidence in English spoken language is a necessity. Speaking skills are the most important of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language. The ability to speak skilfully provides the speaker with

several distinct advantages. The major goal of all English language teaching should be to give learners the ability to use English effectively and accurately in communication

English, as the world language, plays an important role in this age of communication. People speak to maintain existing social relationships and to make new ones. Oral competence is linked with career options, status and reward. English is the language of the aspirations of young Indians. A better-spoken English skill enhances a youth's employability and opens higher paying job opportunities.

Speaking is viewed as the most complex and difficult skill to master. According to Shumin (2002), "learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. "It requires the ability to use the language properly in social interactions.

Speaking activities can fail miserably due to some very real problems in the ESL classroom. In order to help students to overcome their problems in speaking, it is necessary to figure out the factors that affect their oral communication.

Speaking is a crucial skill in second language learning and teaching. It is the means through which students can communicate with others to express their ideas, opinions, information, and hopes or to attain certain goals. When speaking English, many English students face difficulties.

Alonso (2018) has stated that the focus on speaking skill in a second language is inherently challenging, as it concerns one of the skills within second language data that is most difficult to capture. Compared to receptive skills, but also compared to written production, it is possibly the most difficult skill to teach, the most difficult skill to assess and the most difficult skill to investigate".

In the study of Del Rosario (n.d.) entitled, "Communicative Competence in English" it was found out that the students were especially weak in oral test rather than in written test. She established the fact that listening, reading, speaking and writing are the skills needed by the students to be able to have communicative competence. This study is related to the present study because her study affirmed that there is such difficulty in oral expression of English. However, del Rosario's study was broader in the sense that she included both oral and written aspect of communication, while the present study focused only in the oral aspect of communication, especially on the factors affecting the oral communication skills.

In the study of Juana del Rosario (n.d), "The effect of an Intensive communication Program on Verbal Production in Student teaching," it was found out that there is a significant relation between communication skills and a number of failures experienced because of the skills of the students in communication. Students were not that skilful in expressing themselves well through speaking and writing. She concluded that by improving the day to day reaching and frequent sharing of ideas are good for the students. The preceding study is in relation with the present study because it dealt with oral expression in English and it also spoke of practice in raising the language through frequent sharing of ideas as a factor in improving speech, which is one of the factors that the researcher included in studying the factors affecting the oral communication skills.

1.4 Factors Affecting Oral Communication

Bhattacharya (2017) provides five factors that can affect the oral communication or speaking skills of the learners: Listening ability.

Listening plays an important role in the development of speaking abilities. Doff (1998) as cited by Bhattacharya (2017) says that learners cannot improve their speaking ability unless they develop their listening skill. Learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue. Moreover, Bhattacharya (2017) observed that when students talk, the other students respond through attending by means of the listening process. That is to say, speakers have to play the role of both listeners and speakers.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) as cited by Bhattacharya (2017) believe that topical knowledge has a great effect on the speaking performance of the learners. The type of topic under discussion influences the ease of language use, to a great extent. One's lack of knowledge, interest, and preparation for a certain topic can greatly influence one's perceived competence.

When all the learners share the same mother tongue, they tend to use it more than the target language. This results in code switching. Inadequate vocabulary repertoire and weak sentence building skills may be the reasons.

Classroom environment plays a significant role in making a student take part in speaking activities. The atmosphere of the class, the size of the class, the arrangement of seats and many other class-related factors affect the motivation of the students. A conducive and co-operative environment proves to be supportive for learners. It has been observed that students are usually happier and more active in a small class. Teachers pay more attention to each pupil and learners get more involved in the speaking activities. On the other hand, mixed ability class is another factor which hinders the language acquisition process. In these classes, the strong and quick learners are often seen to be dominating the weak learners.

The vital role the teacher plays in making learners willing or unwilling to speak cannot be ignored. If a teacher pays equal attention to all members of the class, encourages everybody to take part in classroom discussions and activities, and gives enough time to students to participate, he or she can considerably enhance the students' willingness to speak. The teachers should build an excellent rapport with their students. It is the duty of the teachers to make the learners aware that making mistakes is a learning process.

According to Tuan and Mai (2015), learners' oral performance is affected by factors like performance situation, affective factors, listening skills and feedback during speaking. In the same direction, one way of overcoming problems that students encounter in learning to speak, is for teachers to apprehend these factors.

Adding to that, Rababah et al (2023) puts forward that there are a lot of factors that cause difficulties in speaking English amongst EFL learners, a few of these factors are connected to the learners themselves, the teaching techniques, the curriculum and the environment. To exemplify, many learners stand in need of the necessary terminology to convey their meaning, therefore; they can't maintain the interaction going.

Oxford (as cited by Yaseen 2018) asserts that one of the most important influences or factors of language learning success or failure is probably the affective side of the learner. Affective factors include inhibition, shyness, lack of self-confidence, peer pressure, family or friends support, motivation and anxiety.

According to Tuan and Mai, (2015), there are some problems for speaking skill that teachers can come across in helping students to speak in the classroom. These are performance conditions, affective factors, listening skill, feedback during speaking tasks, inhibition, lack of topical knowledge, low participation, and mother-tongue use. The last problem related to the speaking ability is that when some learners share the same mother-tongue, they try to use it in the speaking class because it is very easy for them.

A similar observation was made by Alharbi (2015) in Saudi Arabia where learners have low oral skills due to the absence of authentic language learning situations outside and inside the classroom. According to the author, there are several factors that influence the learning of speaking skills for instance use of mother tongue outside and inside classroom environment, low status of English in a country, learners' negative attitude towards English language, use of mother tongue by teachers to explain difficult concept, use of teacher-centered methodology and passiveness of learners in classroom.

Kondo (2018) provides his own factors affecting the oral communication skills of English language learners. The factors are: (1) Peers: A significant support in the learning of children comes from what is called "friends or peers." As children venture around the community where they live, they acquire the natural support that comes from friends or peers. (2) Teachers: Another significant support for language learner, which might be called certified support, comes from the teacher; and (3) the Social and Emotional contexts of schooling have powerful influences on student learning, and teachers' understand the social and emotional development and may design supportive, caring classroom environments.

Alasmari (2015) investigated the barriers that hinder the oral proficiency of Saudi preparatory year students and English language teachers at English language center, Taif University. The study sampled 142 students from Taif University. Results showed that attitudes of students towards English language, frequent use of students' mother tongue not only outside the campus but also inside the classroom with their peers and teachers, their inability to command proper pronunciation, appropriate grammatical structures, necessary vocabulary items, their hesitance to use the target language in front of their class fellows because of their fear of making mistakes etc. were major oral barriers. The results of this study did not reveal any significant oral barriers in relation to the behaviour of English language instructors, English textbooks, Neither English contact hours.

On the same note, Keong et al. (2015), investigated speaking competence of Iraqi EFL undergraduates of Garmiyah University. They employed a mixed-method study, survey, and interviews as their research instruments, to answer three research questions, including (1) the difficulties that Iraqi EFL undergraduate students faced when speaking English, (2) the reasons behind the difficulties, and (3) the level of difference in ability among the students. The findings of the study indicated that participants faced some challenges in relation to their linguistics competences, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The study also revealed that the lack of English speaking practice, the tendency of mixing the language, and

the absence of speaking activity in the course program are the main reasons leading to ELL students' speaking difficulties.

Similarly, Al Nakhalah (2016) performed a study towards the difficulties of using English encountered by English language students at Al Quds Open University. The results of this study indicated that there are some difficulties in the speaking of the students due to some reasons such as fear of mistake, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. The researcher adopted some recommendations, the most important one is to establish environment support and encourage the students to speak English frequently. On the other hand, he suggested carrying out more researches and studies regarding speaking difficulties encountered by English language students.

Furthermore, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) carried out a study on the factors influencing learners' English speaking skill by tracing out the body of research concerning the term speaking, the importance of speaking, characteristics of speaking performance, speaking problems, and factors affecting speaking performance. The results represented that the teachers should praise their students to speak English, give their learners enough time for speaking skill, remind their learners not to worry about making mistakes, and choose the best teaching method to keep their learners' involved in the speaking activity.

In consonance with Leong and Ahmadi (2017), Diep (2017) explored measurements of factors affecting English speaking skills of students at the Foreign Language Department of Van Lang University in Vietnam. This study aimed at finding out the reasons behind the non-fluency of the university students in English speaking. The researcher adopted the quantitative and qualitative approach. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher developed the following instruments: open-ended interviews, class observations in addition to a questionnaire. The questionnaire constituted six factors affecting English speaking and was divided into domains: confidence, proficiency and vocabulary, grammar, learning environment, and instructors. The data were analysed by means of the SPSS program. The results of the study revealed that grammar, pronunciation, and methods of teaching have the highest impact on the English-speaking skills of the university students.

Moreover, Tran and Nguyen (2020) conducted a study about learning English at the University of Thu Dau Mot in Vietnam. They found that the common problems affecting student's speaking performance were that students spoke very little or not at all in speaking classes, they often used Vietnamese, they had no motivation to express themselves using English, and they were fearful of criticism or losing face when making mistakes.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study employed descriptive method of research. This design is appropriate since the purpose of the study is to determine the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the fourth year Education students in a private Catholic University.

2.2 Study Site and Participants

The study was conducted at the College of Teacher Education of the University of La Salette, Inc. The participants of this study were 37 fourth-year education students of the said university who were enrolled for the Academic Year 2020-2021.

2.3 Research Instrument

The researcher adopted the questionnaire used in the study of Gabriel (2008) entitled “Factors affecting the Oral Communication Ability in English of the Selected Second Year Students of Cabulay High School School Year 2007-2008 but modified it to suit the needs of the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

The study utilized weighted mean in the assessment of the level of oral communication skills in English and determine the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the participants. Then a Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine whether there is significant relationship between the oral communication skills and the factors affecting the oral communication of the participants.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

For the study, the following ethical considerations were in place for the study: all individuals were respected throughout the data collections process. The respondents were informed of their options to participate or not to participate. Protocols were put in place to protect the respondents’ anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher obtained consent from the respondents of the study.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Part I. Level of Oral Communication Skills in English of the Students

Table 1. Level of Oral Communication Skills in English of the Students

Factor	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1. He/She addresses the question well.	4.14	Very Good
2. He/She states supporting details to his/her general statement.	3.24	Good
3. His/her statements are logical and basically observable in the community.	3.14	Good
4. He/She shows commendable pacing and language fluency.	3.05	Good
5. He/She displays confidence during the entire discussion	3.16	Good
6. He/She is able to construct grammatically correct statements.	3.16	Good
7. He/She has a clear pronunciation.	3.41	Good
8. He/She is articulate, forms clear and distinct sounds in his/her speech.	2.97	Good

Overall Mean	3.28	Good
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Based on the results of the study, the participant's level of oral communication skill was 3.28 or "Good." Specifically, students were "very good" in addressing the question well, while the other areas had "good" ratings, namely need improvements in the average rating on stating supporting details to the general statement, making a logical statement and basically observable in the community, showing commendable pacing and language proficiency, displaying confidence, constructing grammatically correct statements, having clear pronunciation and being articulate, forming clear and distinct sounds in the speech. This implies that participants have a good oral communication skills in English as all areas had a rating of Good to Very Good.

Part II. Extent of the Factors affecting the Oral Communication Skills in English of the Students

Table 2. Summary on the Extent of Factors affecting the oral communication Skills in English of Students

Factor	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
Practice Factor	3.37	Moderate Extent
Self-Confidence Factor	3.42	Moderate Extent
Reading Factor	3.17	Moderate Extent
Vocabulary Factor	3.52	High Extent
Television - motion pictures & technology factor	3.62	High Extent
School and Teacher Factor	3.61	High Extent
Overall Mean	3.45	Moderate Extent

As gleaned, table 2 presents the summary of the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of students. In the Practice factor, it gained a mean of 3.37, interpreted as a moderate extent. The results revealed that the participants lacked the practice with the use of the English language at home and at school and that they frequently used Filipino. The result also shows that they frequently experience difficulty in speaking the English language. This supports the study of Alasmari (2015) the result showed that attitudes of students towards English language frequent use of students' mother tongue not only outside the campus but also inside the classroom with their peers and teachers."

In Self-Confidence factor, the result revealed a moderate extend factor that affects the oral communication skills ($M=3.42$). It was evident that the participants considered experiencing the factors such as experiencing cold hands before speaking, often missing the words that they are going to say and the fear of failure when speaking the English language. The result on this is comparable to the study of Oxford (1990) as cited by Yaseen (2018) asserts that one of the most important influences or factors of language learning success or failure is probably the affective side of the learner. Affective factors include inhibition, shyness, lack of self-confidence, peer pressure, family or friends support, motivation and anxiety.

While for the Reading factor, it has a weighted mean of 3.17 (Moderate extent). We can see that the participants often read materials both in English and Filipino. When asked about the specific type of reading materials in English only textbooks are considered a factor. Lastly, the results also shows that they often encounter terms they don't know and understand when reading which lead us to Vocabulary factor that shows that the respondents encounters problems such as wanting to say something but can't find the right terms in English, having difficulty in finding the equivalent word in English, finding difficulty in remembering the meaning of the new terms in English that they learn, and encountering terms they don't understand when talking to other people. Which then is also relatedly similar to the study of Urrutia and Vega (2010) stating that students speaking proficiency is affected by their insufficient vocabulary, hesitation, and the worry to be judged by the others.

In Television - motion pictures & technology factor, it shows that they are fond of watching television such shows are documentary, comedy, movie, drama and mini-series. Those shows they watched are in English and it was seen there that for them it was in good quality English.

In School and Teacher Factor, we can see that the participants are receiving varied practical drills from their teacher; writing, speaking and reading. The teachers are not ignoring and tolerating the mistakes done by the students, instead, they correct them on the spot or correct them the next time. The students believe that they have adequate reading material in the library and classroom facilities to practice their oral communications skills. But still they recognize that their difficulty and problem in terms of speaking the English language is grammar and oral expression. In relation, they believe that the causes behind it are the following: poor reading habits, limited vocabulary, lack of interest in the subject, poor quality of English heard, and poor knowledge of grammatical rules.

Part III. Significant Relationship Between the level of oral communication skills in English and the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the students.

Table 8. Significant Relationship of the Level of Communication Skills and the Factors Affecting the Oral Communication Skills

Variable	Level	
	r	p-value
Practice	-0.104	0.540
Self-Confidence	-0.113	0.504
Reading	-0.315	0.057
Vocabulary	-0.039	0.818
Television-Motion pictures & Technology	-0.016	0.927
School and Teacher	0.045	0.791

Based on the findings of the study, there is no significant relationship between Level of Oral Communication Skills to the Factor affecting the oral communication skills. It only implies that regardless of their level of oral communication skills, the factors affecting the oral communication skills of the respondents are similar to other individuals.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study, a conclusion have been drawn that the majority of the student's level of oral communication skills in English is good. Also, they are affected in high extent in terms of Television-Motion pictures and Technology Factor, School and Teacher factor and Vocabulary Factor. The other factors remain to be significantly affecting their oral communication skills in English in moderate extent; the Self-confidence factor, Practice factor and Reading factor. Lastly, it found no significant relationship between level of oral communication skills in English and the factors affecting the oral communication skills in English of the students.

4.1 Recommendation

To address the difficulty of the students in terms or grammar and oral expression, it is suggested that there must be an implementation of activities that will boost their reading habits, their vocabulary, their interest in the subject, more quality of English heard and more knowledge on grammatical rules because the above enumerated are the causes behind the said difficulty. Also, it is vital to integrate activities for practical drills, activities for self-confidence boosters, and reading activities, which will also expand their vocabulary.

Moreover, it is recommended to encourage students to frequently practice the use of the English language at school and even at home for them to address the difficulty in speaking the English Language. Lastly, this result can be used in future research for further conduct of follow-up studies to be able to help in updating knowledge regarding oral communication.

4.2 Implication

The study implies various directions for education, especially to the curriculum development. It is essential to enrich the vocabulary of students through contextual learning, interactive language activities, and even gamified exercises that can promote retention and usage, as this may uplift the self-confidence of students in speaking the English language. The study highlights the significance of fostering environments where students can practice and use English consistently, both within and beyond the classroom.

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Competing Interests

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