Navigating Tongues: Exploring the Internal Factors Affecting English Verbal Communication of Filipino Students

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Abstract

Inactive participation, low performance in class, shy students and having the curiosity in our minds why do students don't speak up? These are what push me to conduct this study, to know why students act like that. Specifically, the researcher aims to answer what are the observed difficulties of grade 7 students in English Verbal Communication. In my research, I use semi-structured interview guide questions, I also use thematic analysis to come up with several themes. For my recommendations, I suggest the following: For the school administration and teacher to practice a conducive atmosphere to students so that students will not hesitate to talk. Students are recommended to actively participate in every classroom activity. In that way the student will get used to present in front of the class. Students are recommended to try using the PSEPS (Practical Spoken English Program). This will help the students with their verbal skills and will boost their confidence.

Keywords: Difficulties, Students, English Verbal Communication.

1.   Introduction

Poverty is one of the root causes of everything and quality education will help eradicate poverty worldwide. These are two of the 16 Sustainable Developmental Goals that the researcher wants to address. According to Nelson Mandela, it is a powerful weapon to lessen poverty. Quality education is one factor that can make a country develop by promoting responsible citizens worldwide.

In addition, language is an essential tool for us to communicate. English has become the global language mainly used by people from news and street signage to businesses, which can open many opportunities in terms of work and especially education. English became the medium of instruction and other countries adopted English as their official language Crystal (2003). English is significant to education because most subjects in the Philippines are taught in English. In a study by Al-Khalil (2015), education can make life progress. Progressing one can give you more jobs globally.

In line with Education, speaking is one of the four macro skills every student must master to demonstrate good communication skills. Unlike writing, listening, and reading, speaking is mainly used in participating in classroom activities. As stated by Efrizal (2012) "speaking is speech or utterances to have the intention to recognize their intentions'. Therefore, speaking is vital to communicating and exchanging information between the teacher and the students actively.

In the case of the Philippines, even though it is viewed as one of the most prominent speakers of English, students still have a hard time speaking and using the English language. As stated, the English proficiency of Filipinos declined and got worse Jimenez (2018). Also, the Individual Participant Data researchers looked at the results of the IELTS of Filipinos and revealed that they have poor quality instruction and resources in English teaching. Aside from that, in the Southeast Asian countries, the English proficiency of Filipinos got lower and Malaysia took the spot of the Philippines, which is very alarming Mizon (n.d.). In addition to that, we need to focus on building a good foundation of English for students to meet the demands of the world.

In world English, Kachru's model of "Three concentric circles" provides countries that use English as their first or second language. In the study conducted by Al-Mutairi (2019) "Kachru's Three Concentric Circles Model of English Language: An Overview of Criticism & the Place of Kuwait in it," He provided countries included in the different circles that influence their use of English language. These are The Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle presents the countries where English is the primary language, or they are native speakers of the

language, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; the Outer Circle includes countries that use English as their second language such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Ghana, Philippines, and others. The Expanding Circle includes countries introducing English as a foreign language in education. Such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, The Emirates, Japan, China, Korea, and others. (Al-Mutairi, 2019)
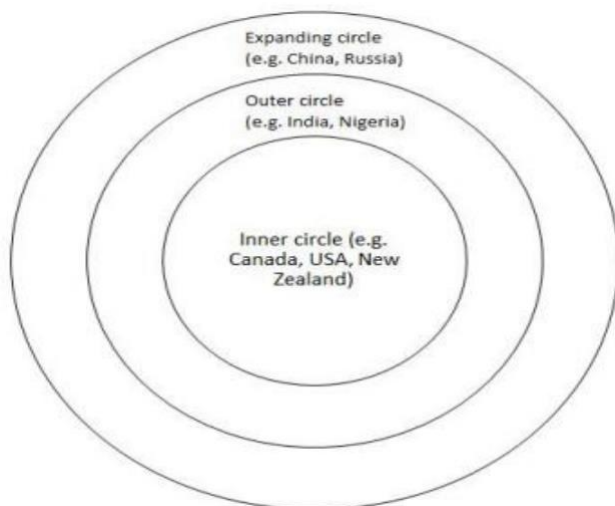
Figure 1. Kachru's three concentric circles model

Knowing their places can also answer why some speakers of other countries are fluent and why second language learners or even foreign language learners find it challenging to learn English. When learning a language for second language learners, teachers provide activities that will let them be immersed in the target language, Activities, such as reading, listening, and, most notably, speaking. In every speaking activity, it is common for students to face challenges such as shyness, motivation, and lack of confidence (Akram and Nosheen, 2013).

In connection with the problem mentioned above, self-perception is introduced. According to Horwitz et. Al. (1986) the self-concept is always evident in a language study, it is your thoughts on how you view yourself when speaking. This can affect the performance, whether it is good or bad. The shyness or anxiety that the learner encounters will be input into the 'Language Acquisition Device' or LAD Lightbrown and Spada (2006). In Krashen's comprehensible input, problems that arise in speaking can be related to the second language acquisition theory 'affective filter.' What causes students not to perform well is the affective filter, wherein their thoughts, anxiety, or the negative feedback create a high filter that prevents them from speaking fluently. (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006).

Additionally, in learning a language, especially in speaking, a student's behavior can be managed by its stimulus. According to Musthofa & Rosyadi (2020) Behavioral theory can affect student performance. Also, in their study "Actualization of Behavioral Theory in Learning Arabic Speaking Skills at the Madrasah Aliyah Level," behavior proponents were introduced and thoroughly explained, such as Ivan Pavlov, Burhuss Frederick Skinner, and Edward Lee Thorndike. Behaviorism entails stimulus-response and reinforcement. Pavlov has Classical conditioning wherein a stimulus can result in a response same as through with B.F. Skinner for operant conditioning, where unpleasant stimuli can affect the behavior. Thorndike believes that stimuli can motivate a person, and the response is the actual behavior.

The concept of cognitive is at the center, wherein the brain controls how a person responds. In the broaden and build theory of positive emotions, According to Fredrickson (1998) feelings and cognition are interrelated, wherein the cognitive capacity of a student and their belief can be broadened using their positive experiences. Thus, positive experiences can affect the linguistic competencies of a student, such as speaking. Teaching speaking can be interactive, and some students can feel the excitement; however, not everyone will feel the same. Students who are not used to speaking English encounter struggles in presenting in front of the class.

In a study conducted by (Hoang et al., 2015)on factors affecting students' performance, the results showed that topical knowledge, motivation, confidence, and pressure affect students' speaking performance. Furthermore, the students agreed that they spoke little, were worried about making mistakes, were shy of attention, and were fearful of criticism.

Ibrahim, et al. (2022) studied Exploring the fear of public speaking through social cognitive theory which was among undergraduate students of UniversitiTeknologi MARA. The study used quantitative research and they focused on fears in public speaking and found that nervousness is one of the highest factors that affect students, followed by their comparison of themselves to the other students. The students negative perception led to thinking they are not good enough, which can lessen their self-esteem. Another is the fear of large audiences.

It was evident that students experience speaking difficulty even before and until today. It calls the attention of everyone that this problem that students experience when neglected can affect how students learn.

In the study Impact of Hindering Factors on Students' English Language Speaking Skills, the researcher investigated on the factors and their effect on the students. The study showed that errors are negatively viewed and thus, students don't want to commit mistakes, which leads to not talking. Another is getting embarrassed in front of the class; in turn, students get frustrated and avoid communicating and now have low self-confidence. Their formal or strict classroom also has an implication; students get scared because it is formal and there should be no mistakes (Kibret, 2017).

In the classroom, the teacher and the student interaction is one identified factor that influences a student in speaking, and the student revealed that they got frustrated if the teacher was strict or they could not follow what the teacher is talking about. Understanding goes down to the vocabulary of a student; when a student does not know a lot of English words, then it can affect them in presenting and expressing themselves in the classroom. (Jafar Batiha et al., 2014)

In a study, "Exploring EFL students speaking anxiety of English teacher education program at one public university in Jambi," for instance, they used interviews. They identified three themes in speaking anxiety, which are the language barrier, psychological issues and learning proponents. (Abrar et al., 2022) also provided strategies that can overcome anxiety; this can include self-management strategy, practicing alone can improve their speaking and lastly asking for help.

Afshar & Asakereh (2016) explain that the problems faced by students can be divided into affective, social, and linguistic. In the same way, in the study of Speaking performance and difficulties faced by English primary students at the University in South Sumatera (Putera Jaya et al., 2022), certain factors were discovered and categorized as affective-related, socially related, and linguistically associated problems. It found that students in the University in South Sumatera are considered low in speaking tests. The affective problems include attitude, anxiety, and confidence for social-related comprehension to practice, and for linguistic issues, they have mentioned vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation.

In public speaking, students with high anxiety tend to experience racing Heartbeats, shaky speech, and sweaty palms (Wang et al., 2020). Anxiety can make students feel inferior or even think they are not confident enough (Sutarsyah 2017). When students think negatively about what other people will say, they speak a little or not at all. In the study conducted on factors responsible for English language oral fluency and its problems, findings showed that poor target language grammar, lack of opportunities to speak, and fear of making mistakes are the factors that affect students (Gul et al., 2022).

A study by Skripsi, et al.(2023) found that anxiety is one factor that can contribute to the speaking ability of the students in SMA Nigerian 1 Parung Bogor. Also, anxiety can be classified into two categories: Facilitative Anxiety, which is more positive, and Debilitative Anxiety, which is viewed as unfavorable. It discussed that when students feel confident in presenting in front, it is facilitative. Still, most students feel debilitative anxiety, wherein they are worried, pressured, and nervous. The researcher categorized factors such as cognitive, affective, and performance, and the students' experiences regarding speaking activity varied.

In Nepal, they view English as a foreign language; even though English is the medium of instruction, Nepalese tend to shift from English to their mother tongue, and students face many

difficulties in English. Research on challenges faced by bachelor-level students speaking English showed problems that students face and it was categorized into personal issues, social problems, linguistic problems, and environmental problems. This research paper also provides the cause of these speaking problems, such as their mother tongue, teacher factors, and the climate in the classroom. (Chand, 2021)

In the Philippine context, several researchers study the factors that affect the speaking of students. Pangket (2019) looked at factors affecting learners' oral proficiency at Bontoc Central School, Mountain Province, and results showed that motivation, pronunciation, and vocabulary affect the students' oral proficiency. The study of (Pontillas Talaue, 2021) presented that communication skills and anxiety are related; moreover, they also studied on the factors that limited communication, vocabulary is not enough, and being traumatized, Resulting in low confidence.

A study by Domogen (2021) on communication patterns in English classes in public secondary schools in Benguet revealed communication patterns and communication barriers that students faced in class. The Communication barriers were speech skill deficiencies, language impairment, low confidence, communication apprehension, and poor reading and listening comprehension. The communication patterns can affect the students' use of the English language, which can hinder them from expressing themselves. Thus, the role of a teacher is vital to hone the student's skills in a language classroom, employing different strategies to make it more enjoyable.

Another study related to fear in public speaking is the "Glossophobic experience among MPSPC Philippines Pre-service teachers through oral Speech Presentation." This study discusses The phobia of public speaking and the barriers they encounter has the acronym LAMP, which stands for Linguistic Obstacle, Audience Manifestation, Mastery of the Topic, and Particular motives.

For the linguistic obstacle, Students are afraid to talk due to poor grammar, incorrect pronunciation, and limited vocabulary; stage fright and shyness are caused by audience manifestation while students do not have a mastery of the topic, which is why they are pressured and most of them get panic when they saw their audience. It was also mentioned in the study that it is normal to feel anxious when speaking, and proper strategies can help students in this matter. (Fagsao & Mi-ing, 2021)

Similarly, in a study by (Licaros et al., 2022) they have studied the factors influencing the speaking skills of BSED Math and identified that affective and cognitive factors inhibit their speaking ability. For affective factors, the researchers came up with two themes, such as shyness and lack of self-confidence, while for cognitive, fear of mistakes and anxiety came out. They also provided some ways to cope with speaking problems to solve shyness, lack of self-confidence, fear of mistakes, and anxiety.

Learning a language and being competent in speaking it needs many factors to consider, and it all goes to our selves. Motivation plays a vital factor in combating anxiety and in our self-perception. Intrinsic motivation factors in second language acquisition are thoroughly discussed, and findings include motivation as correlated to the learning of a student. It was also stated that if a student has a strong will or is determined to learn and practice a language, then that student will eventually learn. (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013)

In summary, the students' speaking skills are greatly affected by various factors. Most researchers focus on factors influencing speaking, while others combine environment and psychology. However, there is limited research conducted to show the factors influencing students' verbal communication skills at Rizal National High School.

With the given theories and concepts from different philosophers and researchers, it is essential to determine the internal factors that affect the verbal communication skills of grade 7 students to manage those factors that affect speaking. As well as serve as a guide for the teachers to assess their learner's skills and needs in speaking performance. This study aims to determine the internal factors that affect students' verbal communication skills. The community, teachers, and students will benefit the most because this will eventually influence their academic performance, boost their confidence, and help them be trained with the speaking skills that will help them be competent in today's world.. It will help not only the learners on to acquire proficiency in English but also strategies For teachers, it can give them knowledge and ideas on how they will interact with their

students who cannot perform well in their class due to psychological aspects such as anxiety, glossophobia, and a lot more. They can think of strategies to boost and motivate their future students. For the community and students, it can provide goals on what they should do to overcome the fear of speaking; it can supply plans for the future researcher who wants to conduct a study similar to or connected to this study.

2.   Statement of the Problem

This study ought to determine internal factors that affect the verbal communication skills of grade 7 students. Specifically, the researchers aimed to answer the following:

What are the observed difficulties of grade 7 students in English Verbal Communication?

3.   Methodology

This chapter emphasizes the design and method employed in this study including research design, instrument and procedures utilized to attain reliable findings.

3.1.   Research Design

The researcher used Qualitative Method with phenomenological research design to depict the factors affecting the verbal communication of students. It will also shed light on the psychological aspect of humans to the behavior.

3.2.   Population and Locale of the Study

Ten teachers at Rizal National High School for the academic year 2023 to 2024 were chosen as the respondents because they have a lot of experiences and observations of students in their speaking activities. Teachers who handle subjects that use English as medium as Instruction were included and Filipino and araling panlipunan teachers were excluded because they are using different language which is Filipino and can affect the outcome of the study. Additionally, it is important for our teachers to recognize any issues that may arise so that they can tailor their approach to meet the needs of their students and offer assistance to those who may require it.

3.3.   Data Gathering Instruments

In this study semi-structured interview questions were utilized. The interview guide was made to fit the context in speaking and to solicit accurate responses from the teachers. The following are the questions in the interview guide.

3.4.   Treatment of Data

The researcher will utilize thematic analysis, transcribing first the data gathered then the researcher will use coding and choosing themes to select the most observed difficulties.

4.   Results and Discussion

This part presents the result and discussion of the study on the Internal Factors affecting the English Verbal communication of Filipino students.

Difficulties or challenges of Grade 7 students in Verbal Communication

Table 1 shows the difficulties that students encounter when communicating in English: the students encountered four challenges. Four teachers said that the most common pattern for grade 7 is they lack knowledge. Another two teachers mentioned that lack of confidence is evident to almost all of the students when they are going to present in class. Also, two teachers presented that students lack in expressing their thought mainly in English language. Two teachers also attest to low performing students those who are not active are those students who struggle when it comes verbal communication.

Figure 1 Difficulties or Challenges of Grade 7 students in Verbal Communication
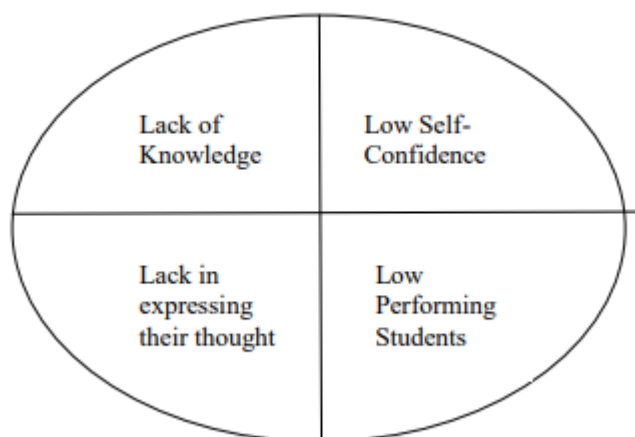
4.1.   Lack of Knowledge

In class the teacher asks questions that will solicit their ideas in a particular topic and it can be via recitation or presentation yet when they are going to use English, students have a hard time explaining the ideas. Most students do not have a lot of knowledge when it comes to the English language. This was also observed by teacher 1 "maybe because they don't know grammar" also by teacher 2 "evident sakanila na hindi sila adept magsulat ng English or ng thought nila in English kapag verbal kasi medyo iniintindi kapag may grammatical lapses". (It is evident for them that they are not adept to write in English or their thought in English if it is verbal they are understanding if there is grammatical lapses.) When we talk about knowledge "the grammar, vocabulary and comprehension will be encompassed" the way students interacts and share their ideas can tell whether that the student lacks the knowledge.

Teacher 8 stated that "lack knowledge then regarding the subject matter or talagang they don't know something about the topic" teacher 8 stated that the students were disturb with the technology and they are not reading a lot that's why they lack the knowledge. Moreover teacher 9 observed that almost all of the grade 7 lack knowledge and mentioned that "they don't know the basic grammar and the basic sentence construction". The teachers also accept that this is really evident and they don't blame elementary teachers regarding this issue. This implies that students pattern lack of knowledge can contribute on their performances for instance the student do not know how to pronounce words properly or how grammar works then the performance will not be that good and will receive criticisms from students then eventually that student will not like to talk in front of class.

This supports the claim of Hoang et al. (2015) on topical knowledge it affect the students speaking performance; their knowledge on English language can affect their verbal communication. Lastly teacher 10 said that "wala silang wide vocabulary to use." (They don't have wide vocabulary to use.) With the above-mentioned statements by teachers this difficulty was observed that can affect the verbal communication of students. These statements support the claim of Afshar and Asakereh (2016) & Putera Jaya et al. (2022) that students have difficulty with their linguistic skills especially with the vocabulary.

4.2.   Low Self-Confidence

Being shy and not having the courage to speak up is another pattern that was observed when they are having presentations and recitations. This is one of the difficulties of students when it comes to oral presentations as agreed by almost all teachers. It was supported by their responses for instance teacher 1 said that "they lack confidence" and teacher 8 stated that "they're not so confident with the grammar" this implies that students lack the confidence because they lack the mastery when it comes to the linguistic skill and they do not have much motivation within themselves. This supports the claim of Hoang et al. (2015)that confidence affects their speaking performance. This was also supported by Chand (2021) that students face difficulty and that is lack of Confidence. Moreover it can be supported by Domogen (2021) regarding communication barriers, having low confidence will affect the use of English language. Students at this grade level have not adjusted yet because this year is the first year for them in the junior high.

Teachers observed that students are still shy that is why the teacher is giving them the chance to know their classmates and by giving them opportunities to speak in front. In every speaking activity teacher 1 stated "They would stutter, they would of the worst thing they would do is they just hesitate to talk" this only show that the students lack the confidence to speak in front of people and they just want to hide their face to their classmates. Also teacher 9 mentioned "Ummm very common yung nahihiya"(shyness is very common) this implies that when they are going to use English language especially in speaking in front of the class most of them would not raise their hand which signifies that students have low confidence. The body language is also is evident when we perform especially if we are nervous presenting in front of people. The students unconsciously do some mannerisms that is manifested in the classroom. This was seen to students who are not active in participating in every verbal communication.

The body movements were observed by teacher 1, 2, 4, 5,8, 9, 10 most of them have noticed that whenever they have an activity which expects them to present in front students shows sign of uneasiness. Teacher 1 said body language such as "Acts like taps of hand, stumbled, stutter, they would cover their mouth". Teacher 2 said "Hindi Silva titingin sayo, yuyuko nila ulo nila, kunya kunyaring nag Babasa". (They will not look at you; they will bow down their head, pretending they are reading). While teacher 4 mentioned "Nagbubulsa ng kamay, nanginginig or sa mga papel kita mo yung nginig, some of them just look on the paper the whole time". (Putting the hands on their pocket, the paper is a little bit shaky and some of the just look on the paper the whole time) Another by teacher 5 "shoulders, padyak, shakey voice, ayaw tumingin sayo" ;(Shoulders, stamping their feet, shaky voice, they don't like to look at you) the same with teacher 10 on the shaky voice. While teacher 8 said "leaders ang nag sasalita" (The leaders are the ones talking) and teacher 9 stated "not looking at the teacher, kini cover young sagot nila".(not looking at the teacher, they cover their answers).Those are the observed mannerism that was manifested in the classroom. Almost everyone who is not comfortable speaking in front manifest this kind of body language and this has the same claim with the study by Wang et Al (2020)and the study of Fagsao (2021) they presented that students experience being nervous, stage fright, raising heart beats and sweaty palms. When students have low-confidence it can be due to their notion that their classmates will laugh at them when they commit mistakes because of their grammar, pronunciation and on their answer it has the same with the study of Licaros et al. (2022) that the students experience being shy due to affective and linguistic factor. This can also contribute to their speaking skill same as through the study of Fagsao & Mi-ing (2021) on their fear of public speaking.

4.3.   Lack in Expressing their Thought

In every class discussion aside from the teacher teaching the lesson, the teacher must also ensure the students participate. The teacher gives them varied activities to let the students actively engage in the learning. When teachers ask them to impart their knowledge on a certain discussion they often ask the teacher if they can use Filipino or their own dialect; when teachers do not permit them to use Filipino, students cannot say what the want to say. This shows that students cannot express their own thought if they are going to use English and they can only express it fully when they are going to use the language that they are comfortable with. It is similar to the claim of Chand (2021) where Nepalese have difficulty in the language since English is a foreign language for them and they need to translate it to their mother tongue it is the same with Filipino students they need to translate since they are not use to English and Philippines is using English as a Second Language. Moreover, students cannot find the appropriate word when asked to explain in English. This implies that when students cannot express their thoughts, it affects their performance. As what the teacher of Rizal Teacher 3 stated that "the difficulty they always have is when they recite they don't know if they will answer in a complete thought" and teacher 8 stated "medyo pare pareho sa isang klase ito hindi sya makaintindi ngayon hindi sya maka salita". (It is the same is the class the student cannot understand the student cannot talk). It will goes down to the knowledge of the student on a particular language and that is English; if the student do not know a lot of English words then it will become their difficulty and if they are going to have speeches or recitation it will affect how they express their ideas,

4.4.   Low Performing Students

Another pattern that was observed by teachers is that the students who are not always participating, not active are those students who struggle with their verbal communication. Those students have low self-confidence and those who have Glossophobia or the phobia presenting in front of their classmates. They often sit at the back or the sides of the room and try not to catch the attention of the teacher in order not to be called. In every speaking activity there are students who can do it at ease and there are students who seem to have difficulty speaking in class.

Students who always want to be the last or worst not even participate when presenting are those who need the guidance from us teachers. Being shy is one of the reasons why students do not participate in oral activities. Teachers have observe this matter regarding shyness and they said that students are shy "walang mag tataas Ngkamay" (No one is raising their hand)if they are going to use English another teacher said that "Kapag impromptu usually they would shy away or they will face the blackboard" another teacher also said "Shy talagaSilayung shy until the end of school year" with that said these are the students who really struggle speaking in front. Aside from that, their way is to keep silent as said by teacher 10 "Nagiging shy nalang and tend to be silent nalang". Sometimes students became shy because of their thought that they are wrong or they are not good enough, it can also due to their classmates who might laugh at them when they commit mistakes. This was expounded by the teachers that even a simple mistake 4 classmates will laugh or some of them will have to deal with it as if it is a big word but in fact it's not; they tease in a joking way and students might feel hurt so as a coping mechanism they hesitate to talk. Furthermore, shyness can be associated with Behavior theory and Affective Filter as it was seen in the responses that the students' behavior is affected by environment and their perception towards themselves. This finding shyness supports the same claim of Licaros et al. (2022), Fagsao & Mi-ing (2021) that students were shy when it comes to their verbal communication. In addition,

As what teacher 4 stated "those students who are not that active are those who struggle in this kind of activities" and teacher 7 mentioned that "students who does not perform well usually are those students also that cannot speak in English so usually the common trend among low performers would be um even if siguro they know the answer and they can speak in Tagalog hindi talaga sila mag sasalita so yun ang common trend naman for performing students they're very eager kasi mostly um students who perform well are also students who are good in English both orally and written"(the common trend among low performers would be I think they know the answer and they can speak in Tagalog they will not really talk the trend for performing students they're very eager).This implies that the same group of students that are not active are those who really struggle and those who always participate are those students who are not struggling. In the studies byHoang et al (2015) and Kibret (2017) they have showed that students are struggling with the verbal communication it.

4.5. Sample Responses
Yes marami, yung kwan talaga yung grammar kasi nila, hindi nila hindi nila ma perfect yung grammar. (t8)

Hmmm siguro yung common is the lack of vocabulary in English lahat siguro sila lalo sa mga grade 7. (t9)

They would stutter they would or the worse thing they would do is they just hesitate to talk hindinalangsila mag sasalita. (t1)

Ummm very common yung nahihiya. (t9)

Yes, since for example I have five sections the difficulty they always have is when they recite they do not know if they will answer in a complete thought. (t3)

Another is yung pag express nila, meron naman nakaka express pero karamihan pag English na nahihirapan na sila mag express. (t5)

Only implies that a lot of students experience this difficulty and those students are those who have negating.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations
This part presents the findings and conclusion of the research study.

5.1. Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher concluded that:

Grade 7 students experience difficulty in their verbal communication because they lack knowledge, exposure, and they are afraid that their classmates will laugh and students who struggle are those students who are not actively participating in the classroom.

5.2.   Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusions drawn from the data, the following recommendations are presented: Students are recommended to actively participate in every classroom activity. In that way the student will get used to present in front of the class. Students are recommended to try using the PSEP (Practical Spoken English Program). This will help the students with their verbal skills and will boost their confidence. Practice a conducive atmosphere to students so that students will not hesitate to talk.

6.   Acknowledgement

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