

The Importance of using speaking skill at sudanese EFL classroom

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). It is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their opinions, intentions, hopes and viewpoints. This study aims to find solutions to improve and develop speaking skill at the Sudanese basic level schools, suggest activities through which teachers can help learners develop speaking skill, test and check the influences of oral authentic material speaking ability in student as a foreign language. The analysis has led to these results: Some students are shy to speak English because they afraid of making mistakes, there are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly, some students are shy to speak English because they afraid of making mistakes, lots of teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English. This study recommended that English teachers in basic level school must be trained and will qualified so as to be go example to their pupils, English teachers should teach English through English and avoid using translation into the mother tongue, teachers should develop their techniques of teaching to facilitate the process of learning skills

Keywords: speaking skills, oral presentation in classroom

1. Introduction

Language is a means of thinking and transferring culture from one generation to another as well as from one nation to another through the history of human being. It is also the medium through which people express their thoughts, ideas and views. In other words language is the medium of communication and interacts with the whole world. Hence, many countries emphasize teaching languages other than the native language to its citizens. Not only are human being who use language to communicate and interact but also their other living creatures use their own language for the same purposes.

Over the last four decades, English has become the most important foreign Language in the world. During this stage of globalization English becomes the first international language, it is considered as a foreign language and basic subject in curriculum system in the most countries of the world. Learning English as a foreign language has become an essential part of our lives. At present, English is the language for international Communication; science; commerce; advertising; diplomacy and transmitting advanced technology. It has also become a "lingua franca" among speakers of languages that are not mutually intelligible (Willis, 1996 ^[42], a and Coury & Carlos, 2001 ^[17]). Furthermore, in the age of "globalism" we live nowadays, the interdependence of nations and countries creates a need for a global language and no language qualifies for this better than English (Abousenna, 1995: xv) ^[1].

English has spread widely all over the world, first because of the influence of the British Empire and, second due to the pre-eminence of North American influence in the world. In Europe, English has advanced as an international language especially after World War II. English is now used by millions of speakers for a number of communicative functions across the world. It has become the preferred language in a number of ambits like UNO, international

business or EU institutions. It is also the language chosen for academic discussion as most scholars face the need to read and publish in English for international diffusion. English is also directly influencing other world languages at different levels but it is especially obvious in the field of technical terms – lexical borrowings are often introduced in many languages without the slightest adaptation. English seems to have been adopted as the language of globalization these days as the language of global culture and international economy.

1.2 Objective of the Study

1. To find solutions to improve and develop speaking skill at the Sudanese Basic Level Schools.
2. To suggest activities through which teachers can help learners develop speaking skill.
3. To test and check the influences of oral authentic material speaking ability in student as a foreign language.

1.3 Question of the Study

1. What is the role the teachers in overcoming the weakness of speaking skill in the Sudanese Basic Level schools?
2. Why are teachers not given training courses in teaching languages skill properly from time to time?
3. What are the modifications that the English language curriculum needs to develop speaking skill?

2. Literature review

Speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode like the other skills. It is more complicated than it seems at first to be and involves more than just pronouncing words. There are three situations of speaking: Interactive speaking situations which include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for

clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner. Some speaking situations are partially interactive, like giving a speech to a live audience, here the audience does not interrupt the speech. The speaker can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and body language whether or not he or she is being understood. Few speaking situations may be totally non-interactive, like when recording a speech for a radio broadcast. Khoironiyah (2012) [30] argues that

“Speaking seems intuitively the most important skill to master. The success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in language. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking is very important because by mastering speaking skills, people can carry out conversations with others, give ideas, and exchange information”.

Hence, by speaking in the classroom, learners should work as much as possible on their own. When people learn a language even their native one, they firstly learn to listen, then speak, read and finally write, these are called the four language skills. In spoken forms listening is input and speaking is output where as in written form reading is input and writing is output, Since listening and speaking are considered to be the base and the first step toward languages learning and the most important skills, these skills are not given the sufficient considerations from lots of teachers and syllabus designers. It is known that teaching listening and speaking needs well experience teachers and the materials that are used in presenting and teaching these skills must be available. Listening and speaking activities must be included in the syllabus and well designed.

2.1 Definition of speaking

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997) [6]. speaking is defined as the production of auditory signals designed to produce differential verbal responses in a listener. It is considered as combining sounds in a systematic way, according to language specific principles to form meaningful utterances. This approach is adopted by audio-lingualism.

Eckard & Kearny (1981) [19], Florez (1999) [22] and Howarth (2001) [25] define speaking as a two-way process involving a true communication of ideas, information or feelings. Trying to elaborate more on the interactive nature of speaking, Burns & Joyce (1997) [6] and Luoma (2004:2) [31] define speaking

“as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking”.

Speaking is one of the most difficult language skills, language learners have to face on. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while teachers of English, have spent all their classroom time trying to teach their students how to write, to read and sometimes even to listen in a L2 because grammar has a long-written tradition (Bueno, Madrid and McLaren, 2006: 321) [3].

Speaking is a skill which deserves much attention every bit as much as other language skills are concerned, in both first

and second languages since in EFL classrooms, teaching speaking plays a great role for the learner's good oral achievement (Bygate, 1987:1) [5]. He quoted that:

“Speaking is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business. It is also the medium through which much language is learnt, and which for many is particularly conducive for learning. Perhaps, then, the teaching of speaking merits more thought”.

Speaking is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Speaking is the means through which ones can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express their intentions, opinions, viewpoints and hopes. In addition, people who know a language are referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language. Furthermore, in almost any scope, speaking is the most frequently used language skill. As Rivers (1981) [39] argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication. Speaking has usually been compared to writing, both are considered "productive skills", as opposed to the "receptive skills" of reading and listening. Speaking also is closely related to listening as two interrelated ways of accomplishing communication. Every speaker is simultaneously a listener and every listener is at least potentially a speaker (Oprandy, 1994 [36]: 153 & EL Menoufy, 1997: 9) [20]. Speaking has been classified to monologue and dialogue. The monologue focuses on giving an interrupted oral presentation and the dialogue focuses on interacting with other speakers (Nunan.1989: 27) [34].

Speaking can also serve one of two main functions: transactional (transfer of information) and interactional (maintenance of social relationships) (Brown and Yule, 1983: 3) [10]. Developing speaking skills is of vital importance in EFL/ESL programs. Nunan (1999) [35] and Burkart & Sheppard (2004) argue that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language. Therefore, speaking is probably a priority for most learners of English (Florez, 1999) [22].

Speaking instruction is important because it helps students acquire EFL speaking skills thus talk spontaneously and naturally with native speakers. Furthermore, if the right speaking activities are taught in the classroom, speaking can raise general learners' motivation and make the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be (Nunan, 1999 [35] & Celce-Murcia, 2001) [16]. In addition, speaking can support other language skills. Recent research has considered oral interaction as an important factor in the shaping of the learner's developing language (Gass & Varionis, 1994) [23]. For instance, it was proved that learning speaking can help the development of reading competence (Hilferty, 2005), the development of writing (Trachsel & Severino, 2004) as well as the development of listening skills (Regina, 1997). Considering the importance of developing EFL speaking skills, it is vital to determine the speaking skills SL/ FL learners have to acquire in order to talk with native language speakers.

Actually, it was assumed that the interactional nature of spoken language requires the speaker's ability to use motor-perceptive skills, which are concerned with correctly using the sounds and structures of the language, and interactional skills, which involve using the previous skills for the purposes of communication. This means that EFL students should acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use

language in the context of structured interpersonal exchanges in which many factors interact (Bygate, 1987^[5] & Brown, 2001). In addition, speaking requires that learners have to understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language ("sociolinguistic competence") (Burns & Joyce, 1997^[6]; Cohen, 1996^[15] and Harmer, 2001^[1]: 269-270). A good speaker hence synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act. Florez (1999)^[22] highlights the following skills underlying speaking:

- a. Using grammar structures accurately.
- b. Assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge, status and power relations, or differences in perspectives.
- c. Selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs.
- d. Applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listener's comprehension.
- e. Paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener's comprehension and involvement.

The upper mentioned speaking skills show that speaking is a very complex activity which differs from other activities because it needs much greater effort of the central nervous system (Bygate, 1998^[7]: 23). It includes sub processes and involves distinct areas of planning. First the speaker has to retrieve words and phrases from memory and assembles them into syntactically and propositionally appropriate sequence (Harmer, 2001^[1]: 269-270). Speaking also takes place in the context of limited processing capacities due to limitations of working memory, and thus a consequent necessity for routinization in each area of production arises. Besides, speaking involves a sort of monitoring during and following speech production and the managing of communication under a range of external pressures (Bygate, 1998^[7]: 23 & Basturkmen, 2002: 28)^[8].

2.2 The Nature of Speaking

Johnson and Morrow (1981:70)^[28] say that "*speaking which is popular with term 'oral communication', is an activity involving two or more people in which hearers and speakers have to react to what they hear and make their contributions at a speed of a high level*". Richards (2008: 19) states that "*The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners. Consequently learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course based on how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency*".

Cameron (2001: 40)^[14] says that speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people can make sense of them. Moreover, it is recognized as an interactive, social and contextualized communicative event. Speaking requires learners to be possession of knowledge about how to produce not only linguistically connect but also pragmatically appropriate utterances (Martinez, 2006: 139). In brief, learners need to know how to use the language in context.

Finochiaro and Brumfit (1983: 400)^[21] propose that speaking means giving oral expression to thoughts, opinions and feelings in terms of talk or conversation. To be able to

do this, language learners should have sufficient knowledge of the sound, structure, vocabulary and cultural system of English language. The learners also have to think about the ideas they wish to express. They have to be able to articulate English sound well by changing the positions of lips, jaws, and tongue. Besides, the learners should be consciously aware of the appropriate functional expression as well as grammatical, lexical and cultural features needed to express the idea, be sensitive to change of register or style necessitated by the person to whom they speak and also the situation in which the conversation takes place. Lastly, the learners must have the abilities to change their direction of their thoughts on the basis of the person's responses.

2.3 The Importance of speaking

Speaking is generally thought to be the most important language skills of the four skills. Indeed, one frustration commonly voiced by learners is that they have spent years studying English, but still they cannot speak it. Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while we, teachers of English, have spent all our classroom time trying to teach our students how to write, to read and sometimes even to listen in a L2 because grammar has a long written tradition (Bueno et.al, 2006: 321)^[3].

Most people consider the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language. Nevertheless, "speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills. What specifically makes speaking in a second or foreign language difficult? Brown (1994)^[3] labels speaking as the most challenging skill for students because of the set of features that characterize oral discourse:

1. Contractions, vowel reductions and elision;
2. The use of slang and idioms;
3. Stress, rhythm and intonation;
4. The need to interact with at least one other speaker.

The most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is always accomplished via interaction with at least one other speaker and this is one reason why many of people were shocked and disappointed when they used their second or foreign language for the first time in real interaction: speakers had not been prepared for spontaneous communication and could not cope with all of its simultaneous demands. Speaking is an "activity requiring the integration of many subsystems all these factors combine together to make speaking a second or foreign language a formidable task for language learners...yet for many people, speaking is seen as the central skill.

There are numerous daily life situations where people need to speak, such as talking to someone face to face, answering questions, communicating through the phone, asking for directions, in shops, meetings or chatting with their friends, to name a few. People spend great deal of their time interacting with more people and, each of these situations requires a different register according to the formality of the moment. We speak for many reasons- to be sociable, because we want something, because we want other people to do something, to do something for someone else, to respond to someone else, to express our feelings or opinion about something, to exchange information, to refer to an action or event in the past, present, or future, the possibility

of something happening, and so on (Lindsay and Knight, 2006: 58) ^[32].

However, human communication is a complex process. People need communication when they want to say something, transmit information or need to speak. Speakers use communication when they want to express or inform someone about something. They use language according to their purpose and it is necessary for there to be a listener and a speaker for effective communication. (Harmer, 2007: 46) ^[24]. Harmer (2007: 29) ^[24] also explains that "*when speaking, we construct words and phrases with individual sounds, and we also use pitch change, intonation, and stress to convey different meanings*". This skill is the most complicated since speakers have to interpret not only the message that other speakers try to express, but also take into account other possibilities explained in the following quotation: Speakers have a great range of expressive possibilities at their command. Apart from the actual words they use they can vary their intonation and stress which helps them to show which part of what they are saying is most important. By varying the pitch and intonation in their voice they can clearly convey their attitude to what they are saying, too; they can indicate interest or lack of it, for example, and they can show whether they wish to be taken seriously. At any point in a speech event speakers can rephrase what they are saying; they can speed up or slow down. This will often be done in response to the feedback they are getting from their listeners who will show through a variety of gestures, expressions and interruptions that they do not understand. And in a face to face interaction the speaker can use a whole range of facial expressions, gestures and general body language to help to convey the message (Harmer, 2007: 53) ^[24].

In the traditional approaches of language learning and teaching, the speaking skill was neglected in many classrooms where the emphasis was mainly on reading and writing. The Grammar-Translation method is one example, Richards and Rodgers (2001) ^[38] mention that reading and writing are the essential skills to be focused on however, little or no attention is paid to the skill of speaking and listening. In the communicative approach, speaking was given more importance since oral communication involves speech where learners are expected to interact verbally with other people. Moreover, the teachers talk will be reduced; that is to say learners are supported to talk more in the classroom. Ur (2000:12) declares also that "*of all the four skill [listening, speaking, reading and writing], speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as, speakers of the language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing.*" Today, many second language learners give the speaking skill priority in their learning because if they master this skill then they will be considered as if they have mastered all of the other skills. Furthermore, the main question often given to foreign language learners is "do you speak English?" Or "do you speak French?" but not "do you write English?" We understand that most of people take speaking and knowing a language as synonyms. Celce-Murcia (2001:103) ^[16] argues that for most people "*the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication.*"

The importance of speaking is more revealed with the integration of the other language skills. For instance, speaking can help students to develop their vocabulary and grammar and then improving their writing skill. With speaking, learners can express their personal feeling, opinions or ideas; tell stories; inform or explain; request; converse and discuss, i.e. through speaking, we can display the different functions of language. Speaking is very important outside the classroom as well. Many companies and organizations look for people who speak English very well for the purpose of communicating with other people. So, speakers of foreign languages have more opportunities to get jobs in such companies. Baker and Westrup (2003:5) ^[13] support that "*a student who can speak English well may have greater chance for further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion*".

2.4 Purpose of Speaking

It was debated that the purpose of speaking can be either transactional or interactional. So apparently, there are some differences between the spoken language that is used in both transactional and interactional discourse. In transactional discourse, language is used primarily for communicating and sending information. Language serving this purpose is 'message' oriented rather than 'listener' oriented (Nunan, 1989: 27) ^[34]. Clearly, in this type of interaction, rigorous and consistent communication of the message is important, as well as confirmation that the message has been understood. Examples of language being used chiefly for a transactional purpose are: news broadcasts, descriptions, narrations and instructions (Richards, 1990: 54- 55). Speaking turns serving this purpose tend to be long and involve some prior organization of content and use of linguistic devices to signal either the organization or type of information that will be given (Basturkmen, 2002: 26) ^[8]. On the other hand, some conversations are interactional with the purpose of instituting or maintaining a relationship. This latter kind is sometimes called the interpersonal use of language. It plays an important social role in oiling the wheels of social intercourse (Yule, 1989:169) ^[10]. Examples of interactional uses of language are small talks, greetings and compliments. Apparently, the language used in the interactional mode is listener oriented. Speakers' talk in this type tends to be limited to quite short turns (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1994 ^[18]: 43 and Richards, 1990: 54-55). However, in spite of the distinctions between the two types, in most circumstances, interactional language is combined with transactional language. This helps to ease the transactional tasks to be done by keeping good social relations with others. In, other words, we can say that speakers do one thing by doing another (Brazil, 1995: 29) ^[11]. So both purposes can be viewed as two dimensions of spoken interaction. Analyzing speaking purposes more precisely, Kingen (2000: 218) ^[29] combines both the transactional and interpersonal purposes of speaking into an extensive list of twelve categories as follows:

1. Personal: expressing personal feelings, opinions, beliefs and ideas.
2. Descriptive- describing someone or something, real or imagined.
3. Narrative-creating and telling stories or chronologically sequenced events.

4. Instructive-giving instructions or providing directions designed to produce an outcome.
5. Questioning-asking questions to obtain information.
6. Comparative-comparing two or more objects, people, ideas, or opinions to make judgments about them.
7. Imaginative-expressing mental images of people, places, events, and objects.
8. Predictive-predicting possible future events.
9. Interpretative-exploring meanings, creating hypothetical deductions, and considering inferences.
10. Persuasive-changing others' opinions, attitudes, or points of view, or influencing the behavior of others in some way.
11. Explanatory-explaining, clarifying, and supporting ideas and opinions.
12. Informative-sharing information with others. This list corresponds closely to the language functions explained by Halliday (1975) [27].

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample of the study

The sample is randomly selected from the teachers of the basic level chosen from the subject they are about 50 teachers.

3.2 Instruments of data collection

The researcher used one tool to collect the data for this study. These tool is a questionnaire for students.

3.3 Procedures

The questionnaire is designed and used as a tool to collect data for investigating the topic the importance of using speaking skill at Sudanese EFL classroom, at basic level this questionnaire is distributed to the EFL teachers at basic schools.

4. Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Data analysis and discussion

Table 1: Lots of teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	31	62.0
Neutral	10	20.0
Disagree	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

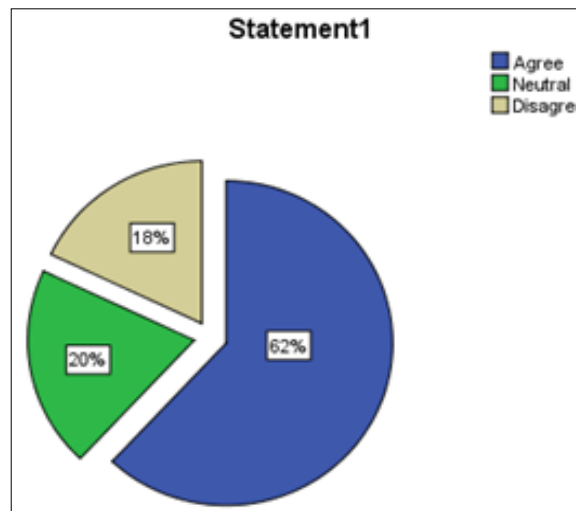


Fig 1

The statement which mentioned that the lots of teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English. The respondents whom in agreement with it (62%), and those in

disagreement are (31) teachers with, (20%) neutral and (18%) disagreement. So the Lots of teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English.

Table 2: Some students are shy to speak English because they afraid of making mistakes.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	37	74.0
Neutral	8	16.0
Disagree	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0

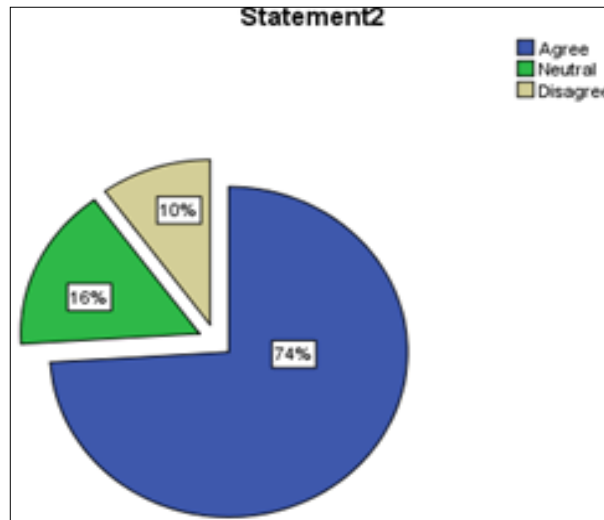


Fig 2

From above table and diagram (4.2) show that, (74%) of the respondents agree that some students are shy to speak English because they

are afraid of making mistakes. (16%) of the sample neutral and (10%) disagree with the statement. Therefore the statement is accepted.

Table 3: There are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly.

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	35	70.0
Neutral	7	14.0
Disagree	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0

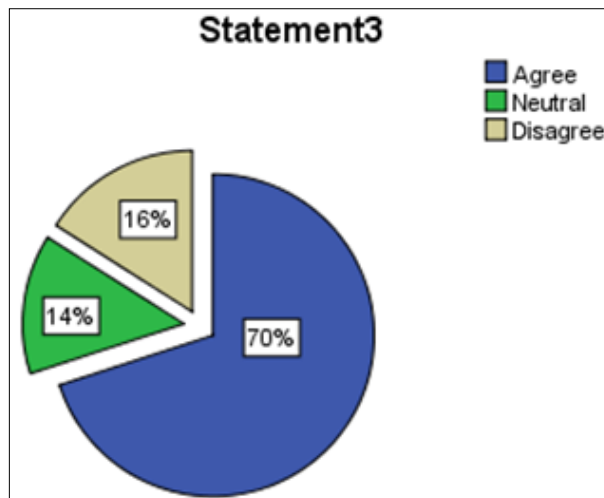


Fig 3

Table and figure (4.3) show that, there are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly, most of the respondents (70%) agree that, there are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly. Therefore, this statement is accepted. (70%) represents the biggest number of the respondents which indicate that there are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly.

5. Conclusion, findings and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Language learning goes through four skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is known that English language is most important language in the world today so it is taught all over the world, it is the first

language to some countries, the second language to others and the foreigner language to in lots of countries. In Sudan English language is taught as a foreigner language like French and Chinese, even it was used as the second language for decades. English language curriculum in the Sudanese basic level should be enriched with listening activities like songs, stories, dialogue and conversations. from the first year English that is taught and introduced to the students. English teachers should use the spoken form in basic level schools from the beginning so as to make students accustomed to this language from an early age, it will be easier for them to interact with each other and with outside world, they can communicate and understand English better and their fears will disappear. The students will be capable to use English correctly when they really

learn the up mentioned skills accurately.

5.2. Findings

1. Some students are shy to speak English because they afraid of making mistakes.
2. There are no labs that train English teachers and students to listen and speak correctly.
3. Some students are shy to speak English because they afraid of making mistakes.
4. Lots of teacher use the mother tongue in teaching English.

5.3. Recommendations

1. English teachers in basic level school must be trained and will qualified so as to be go example to their pupils.
2. English teachers should teach English through English and avoid using translation into the mother tongue.
3. Classroom must feed with screens, internet, video players, CD spalyer and sound system to display videos in English language suitable for the pupils.
4. Teachers should develop their techniques of teaching to facilitate the process of learning skills.

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