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Factors Influence Learners' English Speaking Skill at a Vietnamese University and Suggestions for Improvement

Hanh Do Thi

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

__Abstract:__ - Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as a means of effective communication in second language learning context. Speaking skill is regarded one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language. They are generally facing problems to use the foreign language to express their thoughts effectively. They stop talking because they face psychological obstacles or cannot find the suitable words and expressions. This paper focuses on the factors affecting on language learners' English speaking skill at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) and suggestions for improvement. This paper which traces out the body of research concerning the term speaking, the importance of speaking, characteristics of speaking performance, speaking problems of students at HaUI, factors affecting their speaking performance and suggestions for improvement can be useful to teachers to consider their language learners' speaking needs in English language teaching and learning context.

__Keywords:__ - speaking, importance, characteristics, problems, factors, suggestions.

I. Introduction

While reading and listening are considered to be the two receptive skills in language learning, writing and speaking are the two productive skills necessary to be integrated in the development of effective communication. Of all the four macro English skills, speaking seems to be the most important skill required for communication (Zaremba, 2006). Learning speaking skill is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured based on the ability to perform a conversation in the language (Nunan, 1995). Language learners sometimes evaluate their success in language learning based on how well they have improved in their spoken language ability.

Through observation, it is known that many students said that speaking is the most difficult skill to master. It requires not only knowledge, in terms of mastering vocabulary and grammar, but also a desire and confidence in speaking English because it has to be practiced not only learnt. Many learners state that they have spent so many years studying English language but cannot speak it appropriately and understandably. The aim of this paper is to discuss

The definitions of speaking and the importance of speaking. Then, characteristics of speaking performance is reviewed. Speaking problems of students at HaUI and factors affecting their speaking performance will be discussed. Finally, suggestions for improvement are discussed. Findings of this paper will be beneficial to EFL learners to improve their English language speaking ability.

II. Literature review

1. Definition of speaking

There are a lot of definitions of "speaking" that have been suggested by the researchers in language learning.

In Webster New World Dictionary, speaking is to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995). According to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts.

Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and

processing information. Bygate (1987) believed that speaking is the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. It is regarded as combining sounds systematically to form meaningful sentences. Lewis and Hill (1993) stated that speaking is a process that covers many things in addition to the pronunciation of individual sounds.

While Thorn bury (2005) said that speaking is an interactive and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turn, Clark and Clark (1997) stated that in speaking, a speaker expresses his thought and feeling in words, phrases, and sentences following a certain structure which regulates the meaningful units and meaning of sentences.

It can be concluded that speaking is an oral expression of an interactive process of constructing meaning which involves phonological and grammatical system and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turn in order to give information and ideas.

2. The Importance of speaking

Humans are programmed to speak before they learn to read and write. Speaking is the most important skill because it is one of the abilities that is needed to perform a conversation. Among the four key language skills, speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language. English speaking is not an easy task because speakers should know many significant components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Learners should have enough English speaking ability in order to communicate easily and effectively with other people.

Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations. The modern world demands for the requirement of communication skills for the learners and the English teachers have to teach the EFLs the needed skills so that they will improve their abilities in speaking and perform well in real-life situations. More emphasis is now laid on developing the speaking skills of the learners to pursue their studies successfully once they finish

their education. Moreover, English is the language of getting opportunities for employment and getting success to achieve the desired goals in life.

Efrizal (2012) 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. If teachers want to encourage students to communicate in English, they should use the language in real communication and ask them to do the same process.

According to Ur (2000), of all the four language skills called listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking is the most important one that is very necessary for the effective communication. The significance of speaking is indicated with the integration of the other language skills. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and then better their writing skill. Students can express their emotions and ideas; say stories; make requests; talk, discuss and show the various functions of language. Speaking is of vital importance outside the classroom. Therefore, language speakers have more opportunities to find jobs in different organizations and companies. These statements have been supported by Baker and Westrup (2003) who said that learners who speak English very well can have greater chance for better education, finding good jobs and getting promotion.

According to Bueno, Madrid and Mclaren (2006), speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. Speaking is considered the most important of the four language skills of English. Even the learners learn the language for so many years; they find it difficult to speak in real time situations when it is demanded. Therefore, the English language learners of EFL face many problems in speaking in English. Since speaking skills play a dominant role in communication, people try to learn these skills in order to communicate well with the entire community all around the world. Moreover, speaking skills are also useful for learners when they have to settle down well in their professions. In the modern world, it has become quite common to prove the candidates' talents at the time of their job interviews and many of the selections are

based on the performance of the interview. Besides, the professionals have to give oral presentations as they have to promote the products of their companies or give training to the other colleagues. Therefore, speaking skills play a vital role as everything depends on the way how people communicate their messages with others.

When students learn English, speaking is significant to support their ability to apply the language. Speaking skill has been very important to the success of human beings. The significance of speaking skill is observed in the daily activities of humans. Speaking is an interactive activity and it occurs under the real time constraints. That is, humans can use words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thinking. Speaking skill enables individuals to produce sentences for the real communication, in other words they actually like to communicate in language to get specific objectives (McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

3. Characteristics of speaking performance

According to Mazouzi (2013), learners' activities should be designed based on an equivalence between fluency and accuracy achievement. Both fluency and accuracy are important elements of communicative approach. These criteria are also based upon in the assessment of the oral skills.

3.1. Fluency

The first characteristic of speaking performance is fluency and it is the main aim of teachers in teaching speaking skill. The ability to express oneself in an intelligible, reasonable and accurate way without too much hesitation; otherwise the communication will break down because listeners will lose their interest. To achieve this goal, the teachers should train learners to use their personal language freely to express their own ideas and then avoid imitations of a model of some kind.

Many of foreign language speakers think of fluency as the ability to speak fast, that is why they start speaking rapidly without pauses. Thorn bury (2005) argued that speed is an important factor in fluency and pausing too, because speakers need to take breath. Native speakers also need to pause from time

to time in order to let the interlocutors catch what they said. However, a frequent pausing is an indication that the speaker has problem of speaking. In such cases, Thorn bury suggested what is called "tricks" or production strategies, i.e. the ability to fill the pauses. The most common pause fillers are "uh" and "um", vagueness expressions such as "I mean". Another device for filling the pauses is the reputation of one word when there is a pause.

According to Hughes (2002), fluency is the learners' ability to speak in understandable way in order not to break down communication because listeners may lose their interest. Hedge (2000) expressed that fluency is the ability to answer coherently by connecting the words and phrases, pronouncing the sounds clearly, and using stress and intonation.

Richards (2001) pointed out that fluency is the use of naturally occurring language when a speaker engages and maintains in meaningful communication. This communication would be comprehensible and ongoing in spite of limitations in one's communicative competence.

Harmer (2015) mentioned that fluency refers to focusing on the content of speech to communicate as effectively as possible. Furthermore, Baily (2003) defined fluency as using language quickly and confidently, with limited hesitations, unnatural pauses, etc.

3.2. Accuracy

Nowadays most foreign language teachers emphasized the term of accuracy in their teaching because learners seek more to be fluent and they forget about being accurate. Without structuring accurate speech, speakers will not be understood and their interlocutors will lose interest if they perform incorrect utterances each time. Therefore, teachers should emphasize accuracy in their teaching process. Learners should pay enough attention to the exactness and the completeness of language form when speaking such as focusing on grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Mazouzi, 2013).

According to Thorn bury (2005), learners' correct use of grammatical structures requires the length and

complexity of the utterances and the well-structured clauses. To gain accuracy in terms of vocabulary means to select suitable words in the suitable contexts. Learners sometimes apply similar words or expressions in various contexts which do not mean similar things, so learners should be able to use words and expressions correctly.

Thorn bury (2005) declared that pronunciation is the lowest level of knowledge learners typically pay attention to it. In order to speak English language accurately, learners should master phonological rules and they should be aware of the various sounds and their pronunciations. Learners should also know the stress, intonation, and pitch. All of these elements help learners speak the English language easily and effectively.

Eskey (1983) claimed "Fluency in a language is no guarantee of formal accuracy." A realistic concern is that focusing on fluency may cause the significant effect on accuracy. According to Eskey (1983), "rewarding a learner's fluency may, in some cases, actually impede his or her achievement of accuracy." For example, in order to get meaning across, language learners find the words, but they either pronounce them wrongly or put them together inappropriately. Such problem happens due to the fact that they can speak English continually but express themselves poorly. Thus, although accuracy is not enough by itself, it is still considered as necessary in language learning.

Although learners can still communicate the message to make sense without correct form, it cannot be denied that in order to use the language, learners still need to be able to convert linguistic forms into the ability to actually use them. Although prediction in communicative context may benefit successful communication, fluency is not enough. Without accuracy, misunderstanding may occur because of misspelling, poor pronunciation and grammatical structures. It is therefore clear that as language teachers, both fluency and accuracy must be equally concerned in teaching students to use a language.

In conclusion, it should not be forgotten that accuracy and fluency are not contradictory because

they affect each other. Accuracy brings fluency and fluency brings further accuracy.

III. Problems and suggestions for improvement

1. Speaking problems

There are some problems that students at HaUI encounter when performing their speaking. These are anxiety and lack of confidence, limited knowledge of English, lack of exposure to language, low participation, lack of motivation, and mother-tongue use.

1.1. Anxiety and lack of confidence

Students' anxiety and nervousness affect their progress in speaking the target language. Goh and Burns (2012) noted that anxiety has a negative effect on learning process and learners who suffer from language anxiety feel that speaking another language is a stressful experience. This makes learners at HaUI avoid or withdraw from active oral interactions. They also worry about how listeners evaluate and view them. For this reason, they cannot take risk and put themselves in uncomfortable or embarrassing situations.

Krashen (1982) argued that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. On the contrary, students' lack of self-confidence can obstruct them from making progress in speaking. Harmer (2007) noted that students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy to express themselves in front of others, particularly when they are being asked to give personal information or opinions. Moreover, they worry of losing face if they do not speak well in front of their friends. Krashen (1982) suggested that language teachers can help students gain self-confidence by providing them proper language for social situations, good chances to practice the language and an attractive classroom environment. Moreover, teachers can lower students' anxiety by motivating students, creating an ease environment and particularly accepting a variety of answers (Juhana, 2012).

1.2. Limited knowledge of English

To speak fluently, learners should have adequate knowledge of English through which they can enhance their proficiency. The students' knowledge of how sounds are produced as well as how words are put in meaningful sentences is very essential (Canale & Swain, 1980). Learners should know to pronounce sounds correctly to avoid common problems that are usually transferred from their first language. Also, they have to be aware of features of speech such as stress, intonation and rhythm. In addition, learners should develop their own vocabulary size which helps them in their oral interactions. Goh and Burns (2012) pointed out that learners' lack of words can prevent them from expressing themselves accurately. They also added that learners need to know the grammar of English in order to be understood. To sum up, students should put a great deal of effort to enhance their phonological, lexical and grammatical knowledge of English. Likewise, teachers should use some helpful techniques to heighten their students' awareness of these language components.

While learning to speak English, students at HaUI make many errors due to the linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese. Teachers should encourage their students to listen regularly to authentic English in order to speak correctly.

1.3. Lack of exposure to language

The environment plays an influential role in developing a learner's language. Once a learner receives a lot of exposure to a second language and communicates with the people in the surrounding area, his acquisition of the target language is expected to be highly possible. In fact, the social context is important because it forms a number of learning factors such as second language learner's motivation, goals and proficiency (Beebe, 1985 & Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In his study, Wong-Fillmore (1989) concluded that social setting creates and shapes good chances for a second language learner because it develops his learning potential. In this way, learners who have plenty of opportunity to speak can achieve great fluency in speaking because they practice on a daily basis.

However, in countries where English is spoken as a foreign language like Vietnam, students find it difficult to develop their ability to speak because they do not communicate in English in and outside school. In fact, lack of exposure to English in daily life interactions is considered one of the language barriers which limit Vietnamese students' ability to achieve a high level of English fluency and competence.

1.4. Low participation

In a class with a large number of students (usually from 30 to 35 students), each student will have very little time for talking because just one student talks at a time and the other students try to hear him/her. In the speaking class, some learners dominate the whole class while others talk very little or never speak.

1.5. Lack of motivation

In second language learning, motivation is a key factor which increases proficiency. It is known by two important elements: learners' demand for communication and their attitudes towards the foreign language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). If learners need to speak a foreign language in social or professional situations, for example, then they will appreciate the value and importance of speaking a foreign language and will therefore be highly motivated to speak. Students at HaUI do not have to speak English in social and professional situations, so their motivation to speak is quite low.

Motivation is of all time an "inner energy" that makes a very good preparation for learners to communicate (Juhana, 2012). To keep learners active and responsive in speaking class, it is urgent to build their motivation. The lack of motivation usually results from the failure of teachers to inspire students, to make an effective use of teaching materials and to create an overall stimulating learning environment (Nunan, 1999). To keep learners motivated, it is suggested that teachers provide "constant encouragement and support" (Aftat, 2008 cited in Juhana, 2012) and promote students' awareness of the importance of English and thus enhance their interest in learning the language.

1.6. Mother-tongue use

Because almost learners at HaUI share the same mother-tongue, they often use it in the speaking class. According to Harmer (1991), there are some reasons why learners use mother-tongue in their speaking classes. The first reason is that when teachers ask their learners to talk about a topic that they do not have enough knowledge, they will try to use their language. The second reason is that the application of mother-tongue is very natural for learners to use. If teachers do not urge their learners to talk in English, learners will automatically use their first language to explain something to their classmates. The final reason refers to the fact that if teachers regularly use their learners' mother language, their learners will feel comfortable to do so in their speaking class.

2. Factors affecting speaking skill

To help students overcome their difficulties in learning speaking skill, the author identifies some factors that influence their speaking performance. Learners' speaking performance are influenced by factors like affective factors, cognitive factors, linguistic factors, listening skill and feedback during speaking tasks.

2.1. Affective factors

Oxford (1990) said that one of the important factors in learning a language is the affective side of students. According to Krashen (1982), a lot of affective variables have been connected to second language acquisition, and motivation, self-confidence and anxiety were the three main types that have been investigated by many researchers.

Most of learners at HaUI are stressed out in class, especially when they are called on to speak in class without any preparation because they worry about being wrong or stupid. Therefore, they need to be encouraged to speak bravely so as to promote their speaking competence gradually since motivation is believed to be the most significant factor that teachers can target in order to facilitate learning.

2.2. Cognitive factors

According to Level (1989), the speaking processes include conceptualization, formation, and articulation. Conceptualization refers to what information can be chosen to express the meaning. Formulation refers to the ability of the speaker to decide what proper words to use in appropriate grammatical structures. Articulation requires the speaker to articulate the speech with his articulatory organs. Since all the three processes happen at concurrently, it is contingent that learners make mistakes, especially in face-to-face communication.

Hughes (2002) argued that their speaking is filled with hesitation, false-starts, grammatical inaccuracies, and as well as limited vocabulary. Besides, it is not easy to concentrate on everything simultaneously, so putting too much emphasis on accuracy may cause the lack of fluency, and too much stress on fluency may lead to the lack of accuracy (Skehan & Foster, 1999).

2.3. Linguistic factors

The appropriate use of language forms is important for learner's oral proficiency (Saunders & O'Brien, 2006). Linguistic factors include several features like pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. It is believed that pronunciation plays a vital role in intelligibility (Goh, 2007). In addition, grammar acts as an essential role in learning the structure of English, but the implementation of correct use of grammar in one's speech is more important than learning the accurate use of grammar. Vocabulary is essential for EFL learners since it is the building block of every language. Therefore, it is necessary for HaUI students to keep a lot of vocabulary in their long-term memory.

2.4. Listening skill

Doff (1998) said that learners cannot improve their speaking ability unless they develop listening ability. Learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue. Shumin (1997) represented that when students talk, the other students answer through the listening process. Speakers have the role of both listeners and speakers. It can be concluded that students are not able to reply

if they cannot comprehend what is told. That is to say, speaking is very closely related to listening.

2.5. Feedback during speaking tasks

A lot of learners expect their teachers to give them the necessary feedback on their speaking performance. According to Harmer (1991), the decisions that instructors adopt towards their learners' performance depend on the stages of the lesson, the tasks and the kinds of mistakes they make. Harmer (1991) also continued that if instructors directly correct their students' problems, the flow of the dialogue and the aim of the speaking task will be spoiled. Baker and Westrup (2003) supported the above statement and said that if learners are always corrected, they will be demotivated and afraid of talking. It has been suggested that teachers should always correct their learners' mistakes positively and give them more support and persuasion while speaking.

3. Suggestions for speaking improvement

In this paper, the author would like to suggest some key points for teachers to motivate learners to speak in class. They are summarized from my experience and observations of what works in a speaking class. Suggestions for speaking improvement would be focused on five areas: good language environment, interesting and familiar topics, varied activities, different techniques and effective feedback.

3.1. Good language environment

A good language environment is a relaxed learning atmosphere in which learners are exposed to speak English as much as possible, yet without fears of making mistakes and negative valuation. To make speaking classes less of an intimidating experience for learners, it is extremely needed to make speaking a routine for learners. Teachers should speak English most of the time and only resort to L1 after efforts to elicit all failed; establish simple routines that make students to speak English in class (greetings, ask similar things every day before class, i.e. *how you are today? how was your weekend? what did you see on TV yesterday?*) and let students have five minute's free talk in pairs at the beginning of the class. All these tips build an encouraging atmosphere in which

students deem speaking part of their everyday doings and feel less shy.

3.2. Interesting and familiar topics

Teachers should sometimes give students different topics and allow them to choose their favorite ones. After the allotted time for pair discussions, students will work in a bigger group, practicing ask and answer questions to and from other groups. Teachers can ask students to select some of the topics they like to talk about from the following list: *animals, body and health, classroom items and rules, clothes, colors, daily activities, dreams, hobbies, holidays, house and home, family and relationship, food, transportation, work and jobs, pets, sports, travel, festivals, etc.* The tasks for students vary, from recovery dialogues, role plays to monologues or debates on a certain statement relating to the suggested topics.

3.3. Varied activities

Based on each class's ability, teachers should try to modify a guided speaking activity and turn it into a communicative task. Here are a few activities for a speaking task:

3.3.1. Role-play

Role-plays are the best activities to introduce in the English classrooms to improve the learners' speaking skills in English during the second stage. The teachers form the learners into pairs and give them different topics to perform in the classroom. The teachers give some minutes for preparation and later they can ask the learners to accomplish the task. The teachers have to motivate and inspire the learners while they are getting ready for the task. With proper motivation and constant encouragement, the learners try to perform the given task well and try to speak grammatical sentences. The English classrooms will be the best platforms for the EFLs to improve their speaking skills through role-plays as the learners play the roles related to their daily life situations that take place in contemporary society. This activity can help students to overcome their shyness, fears and anxiety.

3.3.2. Story-telling

Through this activity, the teachers create situations and ask the EFLs to continue the story. Then the EFLs think logically and supply sentences that are relevant to the situation. As the learners have their own choice in giving responses and selecting the grammatical structures, they try to produce as many sentences as possible to complete the story. Moreover, there is no hard and fast rule to eliminate any points of the children since these stories are purely imaginative, not realistic ones. This activity encourages all the EFLs to contribute at least one sentence to finish the story successfully. Therefore, it is the duty of the teachers to encourage their learners to produce as many sentences as possible so that the learners' oral communication skills, as well as their power of imagination, will be immensely developed in a pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere.

3.3.3. Games

Generally, most of the learners are interested in playing games in the classrooms and it is quite common that they ask for more and more games as they make them happy. When the learners practice these games in a fun environment, it is sure that they really improve their speaking skills enormously. The teachers should introduce fun games like guessing the item that is held in their wrists. In this connection, the teachers hold something in their wrists and keep the item as a secret one and the learners have to go on guessing it. Indeed, such types of activities certainly improve EFLs' speaking skills. As the learners have to just guess the unseen object and they have their own choice and freedom to express their opinions, they come out with more options and produce innumerable sentences in a learner-friendly environment. Therefore, the teachers should introduce such activities in their regular classrooms in order to involve the EFLs more and improve their speaking skills.

3.3.4. Music and movies

Another activity to improve the speaking skills of the EFLs is to make them listen to music in English and sing along. Music is considered one of the best tools for learning intonation and pronunciation. When the song is easy to understand, then listening to and singing songs also help the learners remember the vocabulary and phrases. Moreover, music helps the learners learn to pronounce English rhythm in a more natural way. Just by imitating the singer unconsciously, the learners can learn to pronounce phrases the way the native speakers do. Furthermore, movies also seem to be a much better option for the EFLs to learn speaking skills in English. By watching movies, the learners get the opportunity to learn listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, idioms and slang. Since songs and movies develop the speaking skills of the learners, the EFL teachers should introduce this activity in their classrooms in order to improve the EFLs' speaking skills.

3.3.5. Pair work or group work

Activities such as pair or group work also enhance the learners' speaking skills enormously since the learners get an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in a congenial atmosphere. The English teachers have to think of the needs and interests of the learners while selecting topics for these activities. When learners work in pairs or groups, they work independently and try to speak more and produce many sentences. This will certainly be helpful for the EFLs to boost up their confidence levels and inspire them to practice these speaking skills whenever and wherever they get the opportunity to speak. Therefore, the teachers should provide more opportunities for learners to participate actively in pairs or groups to enhance their speaking skills.

3.3.6. Interview

The significant advantage of interviews is their flexibility. They can be long or short and useful for learners from beginning level to advanced level; with high aptitude and low aptitude learners. They can be considered as additional oral activities or subsequent writing task.

3.3.7. "Speaking about yourselves"

Teachers can introduce some activities such as "speaking about yourselves" by giving their own examples to the classroom. Thus, with the motivation they get from their teachers, the learners go on speaking about themselves since everything they speak is a fact that has been already stored in their memory. Then the teachers may extend this activity

by asking the learners to say something about their parents, best books or best friends. Hence, these activities certainly give a chance for the learners to acquire speaking skills in a pleasant way. The teachers can also introduce brainstorming technique in their classrooms as it encourages the EFLs to produce more sentences and also try to think of themselves for getting new ideas about the topic given to them. In this technique, the leaners have complete freedom to express any point that is related to the topic. As there is no hard and fast rule in expressing their ideas, automatically the learners will be motivated a lot and try to produce as many ideas as possible. Therefore, the EFL teachers should implement this brainstorming technique in their classrooms in order to involve the EFLs more in the activities and to develop their speaking skills unconsciously.

4. Different techniques

Teachers should introduce a variety of techniques in their classrooms by selecting simple and useful material that creates more interest and attentiveness among the EFLs towards learning speaking skills. Teachers should draw their interest into the topic, provide them with useful language to communicate and make the language sink in their mind. In order to do so, teachers should conduct the scaffolding steps as follows: personalize the story to draw attention; double check by asking questions to make sure students understand and make them better memorize the details/vocabulary/expressions; give written record of the useful words and phrases students will need to tell the story themselves; ask for a reproduction of the story by asking a few students (whose language competence is better) to retell a story; give preparation time for students to think about and note down the words and phrases they will need for the speaking task; monitor the class as they are speaking, note down both good uses of language and mistakes, be available for support at any time students need.

5. Effective feedback

In order to make students feel safe and motivated to speak, teachers should make the classroom an encouraging place where students feel free to try

things out without fears of criticisms. Teachers should ask students to focus on fluency over accuracy in speaking class. Explain to them that focusing too much on grammar will impede their fluency and create unnecessary fears of making mistakes. To mitigate students' fear of mistakes, teachers should accept more than one answers and create activities that promote students to diversify their expressions, make them try best with the available language to get the tasks done.

In terms of giving feedback, teachers should do as follows: avoid correcting students as they are talking; make the necessary corrections after they finish; during the speaking time, teachers should walk around the pairs/ groups, take notes of what the class has done and give students praise for the good language use and corrections for mistakes. For on the-spot feedback, teachers should avoid negative comments like *no, you're wrong, incorrect, etc*. For good answers, teachers should give compliments such as *well-done, very good, excellent, great, etc*. For answers that need further work on, teachers might say: *thank you but …, good try, yes but it is more correct to say…* For delayed feedback, start with a positive comment of the overall completion of the task. Then write common mistakes (around ten) on the board without saying who made them to avoid embarrassment. Give students some minutes to correct the sentences themselves. As they read their correct versions, teachers correct the sentences on the board. By doing this, the students can recall their mistakes and better memorize the things they have learned.

III. Conclusion

This paper reviews the factors affect students' English speaking performance and gives some suggestions for improvement. The mentioned factors in this paper have an important role in developing learners' speaking skill. They make learners less self-confident and less comfortable in their speaking classes. The paper indicated that learners with higher anxiety, limited knowledge of English, low motivation and confidence have serious difficulties in speaking skill. The paper also showed that students who have lower anxiety, higher motivation

and confidence can speak easily and effectively. Based on the review of the literature, some suggestions for teachers are given as follows: understand students' interests and feelings, improve their self-confidence, and choose the best teaching method to keep them involved in the speaking activity; build a friendly relationship with students, make them have a feeling of great enthusiasm and eagerness to speak English; remind learners not to worry about making mistakes, and give them enough guidance; give learners more opportunities to speak English through using some speaking tasks that help them to speak and urge them to take part in speaking activities; know when and how to correct learners' mistakes so that they are not afraid of making mistakes.

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