

Oral Communication Skills of Grade VI Learners

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Keywords— articulation, communication disorders, distortion, frustration, instructional, independent, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI),

Abstract

The study focused on the oral communication skills along with articulation disorders among Grade VI learners of Balong Elementary School. It significantly analyzed the common errors committed by the respondents along articulation disorders. The study used the descriptive-qualitative type of research method. The data were gathered through administering an oral reading assessment with the use of a passage lifted from the Phil-IRI Module entitled “Galileo, The Scientist” consists of 89 words. It was found out in the study that the level of proficiency of most of the learners in oral communication falls under instructional level. The frequency of errors in oral communication disorders along articulation disorder shows that “imperfect production of phonetic elements” has the most committed error with 306 or 56.77%. “Omission of certain speech sound” ranks second with 119 or 22.08% errors. Third is “substitutions” with 98 or 18.18%. Fourth is “distortions” with 10 or 1.86% and the least is the “baby talk” with 6 or 1.11%. Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn: a) Some of the learners are not well-versed enough in reading sight words; b) imperfect production of phonetic elements or mispronunciation as the most common error committed; specifically, on pronouncing words with long /a/, soft /th/, and vowels ‘ou’ with schwa /ə/ sound; c) the most common factor affecting the oral communication skills of the learners is “lack of reading experience in school and at home”; and d) to minimize or avoid the errors in oral communication, intervening activities may be implemented.

1. Introduction

Communication skills are vital for a learner’s academic success. Good communication enables learners to assimilate more from the learning process by empowering them to ask relevant questions and discuss doubts (Lucanus, 2017).

The goal of learning a language is to communicate. Oral communication skills are fundamental to the development of literacy and essential for thinking and learning. It is the glue that puts all the components of a language together.

According to Ontario Curriculum for Languages, “Oral Communication skills are fundamental to the development of literacy and essential for thinking and learning. Through talk, students not only



communicate information but also explore and come to understand ideas and concepts; identify and solve problems; organize their experience and knowledge; express and clarify their thoughts, feelings, and

opinions. Listening and speaking are essential for interaction at home, at school, and in the community (Evans, 2018).

According to Ur (1996, 120), “of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking or communicating seems intuitively the most important.” Indeed, whether for business or pleasure, a primary motivation to learn a second language is to be able to converse with speakers of that language. However, in addition to being an important skill, communicating is also a great challenge for foreign language learners, and students must master several difficult micro skills, including the pronunciation of unfamiliar phonemes, the correct placement of stress and intonation, and the appropriate use of formal and informal expressions (Zhang, 2009).

As a social animal, man needs to communicate effectively with others. It is an ongoing process—past, present, and future. It serves not only as a bridge in time but also as a bridge across distances that can penetrate barriers of human individuality. It is the spark that ignites understanding and relations among human beings even across culture. It plays a variety of functions in an individual’s life and society (Padilla, et al. 2003).

The medium for communication to take place is language. Learning a language involves communication between the speaker and listeners. As a speaker communicates, he causes an action on the listeners’ part and, in turn, the listener makes inferences or reacts to what he hears. While the language teacher plays many roles, his basic task is to help learners progress in their communicative ability. The indispensability of the use of the English language in all forms of communication is beyond argument. It is a necessary tool not only for learning but for understanding other cultures, developing better decisions. Practically, one must depend largely on his proficiency in the language of communication to bridge his knowledge and attitudes (Sotero, 2007).

A person who spends an hour, a day, or a week without any form of communication considers himself isolated or humiliated from the rest. Learners in any grade or year level who have poor communication skills are prone to failures and difficulty keeping pace with the demands of global competitiveness.

Communication is indeed a basic human activity, and the development of communication competencies is a highly individualized process as no individual conforms exactly to precise development norms. Some are advanced, some are delayed, and

some acquire the language in an unusual sequence. Skills in communication in whatever aspects need time to be developed. They are learned skills. Rules are essential and teachers know that any student who cannot develop the skills is handicapped in communicating with others. It is therefore a continuing challenge for teachers to develop the communication skills of students (Caole, 2012).

Man uses language to satisfy himself, achieve his goals and aspirations and live peacefully with others. When students manifest basic competencies in communication, they are assured of a strong foundation for their future success. This is so as social interaction activities require speech as clear manifestation to establish and maintain the social order. It is basic to success in whatever fields of interest an individual is in pronouncing one’s ability to say what is felt, observed, and suggested, express ideas and opinions, persuade others and convince others to react on an issue and the like. All things being equal, a person who can effectively communicate has an edge. A physician in his profession must speak in ways best understood by his patients, the lawyer within level of laws clearly and specifically and teachers within the clear understanding of students (Reyes, 2008).

A good manipulation of language is not only to prepare pupils for the next ladder of schooling but to make them satisfy the emotional need for socialization and active involvement in activities to be part of the so-called “human family”. 21st Century Filipino learners must be able to compete with the best, brightest and fastest around the world. Basic education as the first ladder must hone each pupil who can be at ease in using the language in both oral discourse and in written form (Perez, 2007).

Speaking is the second aspect of communication arts after listening. Grammar as one of the criteria in a language is involved in speaking and writing. A good background of grammar makes one set words into a meaningful pattern; makes one aware of the standards on writing and helps one identify forms and constructions appropriate for certain context (Mande, 2010).

The language competence is entangled with a child’s emotional maturity, ego development and interpersonal skill competence. The linguistic growth of a child in his social environment moves forward as the convergence of factors such as those that spring from the child and those contributed by his environment and the schools (Bontao, 2010).

Balong Elementary School 6th graders had been observed being uneasy whenever talked to by the researcher during class hours in English leading them less productive in any oral activity given to them. They often refuse to even read sentences or phrases or even a word whenever asked to. They can only participate if done in a chorus reading, but if it is done individually, they are hesitant already to do the reading task assigned to them.

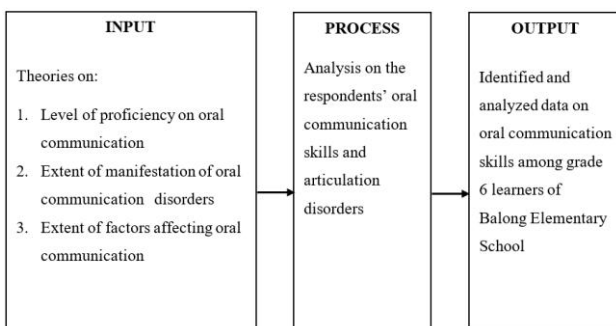
It is in this research that may lead the researcher identify common oral communication disorders that must be addressed as soon as possible, for he firmly believes that 21st century grade 6 learners must hone their communicative skills in every way possible so that they can become active and productive citizens of the country. Teachers, on the other hand, must take the risk to upgrade their strategies, methods, or media for such instructions.

2. Objectives of the Study

The researcher sought:

- 2.1. To determine the level of proficiency of the learners in oral communication.
- 2.2. To investigate the frequency of Errors of Grade VI learners in the manifestation of oral communication disorders along articulation disorders.
- 2.3. To investigate the common factor affecting the oral communication skills of the pupils based on their reasons why they commit the error.
- 2.4. To determine the intervening activities which could help the learners minimize the errors where they committed the highest number.

3. Paradigm of the Study



4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This research used the descriptive-qualitative type of

research method which intended to observe, describe, and document the needed data for the study. The data were generated using Phil-IRI passage which were treated using the formula of computing for the word recognition and comprehension skills of learners. Frequency -percentage was also used in identifying the most prevalent communication disorder among the learners.

4.2. Locale and Population of the Study

This study was conducted at Balong Elementary School, Northern Tabuk District 2, Division of Tabuk City. It involved the 47 grade 6 learners of the school.

4.3. Data/Statistical Analysis

The needed data were determined through reading a passage lifted from the Test Materials on Phil-IRI Oral Test.

Furthermore, an interview was conducted in gathering the data on the reasons why the learners committed the errors.

The pupils' performance along the level of proficiency in oral communication were given statistical equivalent through the

Phil-IRI Oral Test Criteria:

Level of Proficiency in Oral Communication

| Word Recognition | Comprehension | Reading Level |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 97%-100% | 80%-100% | Independent |
| 90%-96% | 59%-79% | Instructional |
| 89%-below | 58%-below | Frustration |

In identifying the reading proficiency of the pupils in word recognition and comprehension, the following below was used.

Level of Reading Proficiency

| Word Recognition | Comprehension | Reading Level |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Independent | Independent | Independent |
| Independent | Instructional | Instructional |
| Independent | Frustration | Frustration |
| Instructional | Independent | Independent |

The responses on the frequency of factors affecting oral communication were determined through an interview with the learners.

The level of the pupils in word recognition was computed thru the following formula:

Word Recognition (WR): $\frac{\text{No. of major miscue (M)}}{\text{No. of words in the passage (N)}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of M}$
 $\% \text{ correct} = 100\% - \% \text{ of M}$

The pupil's comprehension level was computed using the following formula:

Comprehension (C): $\frac{\text{No. of correct answers}}{\text{No. of questions}} \times 100 = \% \text{ of CR}$

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Level of Proficiency of the Grade VI learners in Oral Communication

| Level of Proficiency | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|------|
| Frustration | 13 | 27.66% | 2 |
| Instructional | 26 | 55.32% | 1 |
| Independent | 6 | 12.77% | 3 |
| Non-reader | 2 | 4.26% | 4 |
| TOTAL | 47 | 100% | |

The distribution of pupils in terms of reading proficiency shows that twenty-six or 55.32% of the pupils are at instructional level. This finding means that most of the pupils obtained a scores of 90-96% in word recognition and 59-79% in comprehension. Thirteen or 27.66% are in frustration level, followed by six (6) or 12.17% in independent level, and two or 4.26% in non-reader level.

This finding correlates with the research conducted by Caole (2012) and Rodriguez (2007); wherein, they both found out that learners fall under the “moderately proficient or satisfactory level”. These levels could be associated to instructional level for most of the learners do have difficulties in pronouncing words, pausing appropriately, and in comprehending what has been read. This was deliberated to be caused by the influence of the first language of the learners for in the first place, this class is one of those who have been covered with Mother Tongue-Based Language – Multi-Lingual Education (MTBL-MLE) as a subject. In the first language, Iloko, most of the sounds of certain alphabets were introduced with the Filipino sounds during their lower grades (grades 1 up to 3). Thus, they tend to carry it until they reach higher grades (grades 4 to 6). Considering this, Dingil (2012) also found out the same.

However, this contradicts with what Maborang (2016) stated in her study that grade 8 students have a developing reading ability level which goes with what Domingo (2016) found out wherein, majority of

the respondents belong to the frustrated level of reading proficiency.

Table 2: Frequency of Errors of Grade VI Learners in the Manifestation of Oral Communication Disorders Along Articulation Disorders

| Articulation Disorder | Errors | Percentage | Rank |
|---|--------|------------|------|
| 1.imperfect production of phonetic elements | 306 | 56.77% | 1 |
| 2.distortions | 10 | 1.86% | 4 |
| 3.substitutions | 98 | 18.18% | 3 |
| 4.omissions of certain speech sounds | 119 | 22.08% | 2 |
| 5.baby talk | 6 | 1.11% | 5 |
| Total | 539 | 100.00% | |

The frequency of errors in oral communication disorders along articulation disorder shows that “imperfect production of phonetic elements” has the most committed error with 306 or 56.77%. “Omission of certain speech sound” ranks second with 119 or 22.08% errors. Third is “substitutions” with 98 or 18.18%. Fourth is “distortions” with 10 or 1.86% and the least is the “baby talk” with 6 or 1.11%.

This indicates that most of the learners mispronounced phonetic elements like in words with long /a/ sound, vowels “ou” with schwa /ə/ sound, and soft “th” sound. These can be read on the following sample reading scenarios which took place during the oral reading assessment conducted at school and at home.

[1] “In one of his books, Aristotle said heavy objects fell at the sa-me (same) ra-te (rate) of speed. He tested the teory (theory) and discovered it.”

As in [1], imperfect production of phonetic elements or mispronunciation really existed for most of the learners were hard up on reading the words same, rate and theory. This indicates that most of them are confused on long /a/ and soft /th/ sound.

[2] “At yong (young) age, Galileo layked (liked) Science books wrayten (written) by Aristotle.

We can see in [2] that vowels “ou” with schwa /ə/ sound in the word young and sound of short “i” in the word “written” were mispronounced.

This corroborates with the findings of Dingil (2012) for she found out that the most common reading difficulty of the pupils is in mispronunciation of words read. In addition, Zazeante (2010) also found out that the pupils need improvement along pronunciation with accent or diction and pronouncing words with final /th/ sound.

In addition to this, Buguina-Iquin (2016) found out that the common errors frequently committed by

pupils in their speech are the errors on contrastive sounds of /I/ - /i/ and /Θ/ - /ð/ in their speech.

Moreover, Frogoso (2014) also adheres to this for she stated that mispronunciation has the most error committed by the pupils.

When respondents were asked why they committed errors in pronouncing words read, most of them said “First time a mabasak, Sir” (It is my first time reading those words, Sir), “Haan ko ammo ti correct a pronunciation na, Sir” (I don’t know the correct pronunciation, Sir), and few of them said that “Isu met gamin ti malagipko nga panangibalikas ni Ma’am mi idi Grade 5 kami, Sir.” (It is how our grade 5 teacher reads or pronounces those words when we were in grade 5, Sir).

In their answer which is “first time a mabasa” (first time to read) has something to do with the weak or irregular conduct of reading drills in the school or may have been due to the lack of interest in reading for this has been proved by Dingil (2012) where she found out that pupils have not acquired the minimum competencies in reading due to lack of reading experiences, lack of reading materials in school and at home, and lack of interest to read.

However, in their answer which is “Isu met gamin ti malagipko nga panangibalikas ni Ma’am mi idi Grade 5 kami, Sir.” (It is how our grade 5 teacher read or pronounce those words when we were in grade 5, Sir) implies that the learners have high regards to their teachers. Their respect and obedience lie in believing that teachers are role models to emulate with which makes them passive to their teachers regardless of the idea whether the teacher is right or wrong.

This corelates with the findings of Luna (2009) and Bunagan (2004) wherein they found out that “teacher-related factor” is taken to be the most extent of contribution especially along “pronunciation”.

In addition, this agrees with what Caole (2012) cited in her study which is “How teacher pronounces a word/s may either promote the welfare of his students or contribute to his failure.”

In relation to this, Frogoso (2014) also stated that this occurrence is affected by the common dialect that they speak at home which is Iloco wherein /th/ sounds are not present.

“Omissions of certain speech sounds” ranks second with a total error committed of 119 or 22.08% which indicates that some of the learners neglect to pronounce certain speech sounds like /s/ and /d/.

[3] ...toy(s) that move(d). Heavy object (s) fall faster than the lighter object(s).

As in [3], we can see that there are certain phonetic elements being omitted and these are /s/ and /d/.

This finding contradicts with the statement of Luna (2009) for she revealed that the pupils exhibited proficiency on not omitting certain sound in words read; but, adheres to the statement of Buguinan-Iquin (2016), for she found out that the common error frequently committed by pupils in their speech is the rule governing the sounds of /s/ and /d/.

In support to this, Pillai and Paramasivam (2014) found out that the highest number of miscues made was omission. It included omitting the ‘-s’ and ‘-ed’ at the end of words. It is difficult to gauge the reasons why these endings of words were omitted. It could be because of negative transfer from the mother tongue (L1) of the Malay learners.

This finding totally agrees with what Caole (2012) found out; wherein, omissions of certain speech sounds is the most manifested disorder.

When the researcher asked why they keep on omitting the certain sound, most of them said that “Nagpaspas nak iti panagbasak, Sir.” (I hurried in reading, Sir) few of them said that “Narigat nga i-pronounce.” (It is difficult to pronounce) and a learner with a short tongue said that “Marigatanak mangibalikas iti /d/, Sir.” (I find difficult to sound out /d/, Sir) hindering her to pronounce words with /d/ often.

In their answer which is “Nagpaspas nak iti panagbasak” (I hurried in reading) implies that they seem to be careless in reading leading them to omit certain phonetic elements like /s/ and /d/ attached in words, especially on verbs.

The analogy here is based on the response of the learners that they manifest the disorder because they have difficulty producing the sounds and it is easier for them to omit the sound to finish a task. (Caole, 2012)

Regarding Substitution, the following were the common errors.

a. the word ‘liked’ was substituted with ‘likes’, e.g. At a young age, Galileo likes (liked) Science books written by Aristotle.

b. the word ‘invented’ was substituted with ‘invited’ and ‘that’ with ‘the’, e.g. He invited (invented) toys the (that) move.

c. the word 'belief' was substituted with 'believe', e.g. To prove the believe (belief)...

We can see in (a) that /d/ was substituted with /s/ in the word 'liked'. In (b), the word 'invented' was totally substituted with 'invited' and 'that' with 'the' while in (d), /f/ in the word 'belief' was substituted with /v/.

This shows that the pupils are poor in their reading, and they do not have the capability of using the context to predict the words. This is the same with the findings of Pillar and Paramasivam (2014); wherein, they stated that the pupils lack capability of predicting how words are read.

When learners were asked why they committed the error, majority of them said "Kunak nu isu iti balikas na, Sir." (I thought that is its pronunciation, Sir). This implies that they possess limited word attack skills because they lack guided reading experience in school and at home.

This finding agrees with what Domingo (2016) found out; wherein, learners have limited reading strategies employed because they are only confined to using dictionaries when they encountered unfamiliar words.

Dingil (2012) also stated that pupils have not acquired the minimum competencies in reading due to lack of reading experiences, lack of reading materials in school and at home, and lack of interest in reading.

Moreover, Wartem (2010) also adheres to this as he stated that pupils were unable to advance in reading due to varied problems met like absence of motivation from parents and teachers which can be observed in the absence of instructional materials or books at home and in school.

As to distortions, the most made error were the following:

- a. the word 'travel' was read as 'treval' e.g. During Galileo's time, the sun was believed to treval around the earth.
- b. the word 'tasted' was read as 'tatse' e.g. He tatse the theory...
- c. the word 'belief' was read as 'belife' e.g. To prove the belife, he...
- d. the word 'theory' was read as 'theryo' e.g. Galileo disproved Aristotle's theryo.

In (a), we can see that the vowel 'a' and 'e' was interchanged in the word 'travel'. In (b), the consonants 's' and 't' was interchanged while in (c),

the vowel 'e' and consonant 'f' in the word belief was interchanged. These imply that they tend to relocate phonetic elements in words read as an effect of unmastered skill in reading.

When learners were asked why they committed the said error, most of them said that "Isu ti ammok nga basa na, Sir." (It is what I know, Sir) which implies that they lack ability in reading.

These show that the learners have limited attack skills and little idea on English word pronunciation. They rely on words visual approach; they are only able to pronounce words that they are familiar with. (Pillai and Paramasivam, 2014)

Baby talk was of lowest frequency of error which is 6 or 1.11% committed. The errors committed was in reading the word 'invented' as 'ingmented'; travel as 'ngravel'; and written as 'rinen'.

As observed by the researcher, the learner has a short tongue which made her read that way.

Though baby talk disorder has the lowest error committed and is due to physical disorder of the learner, there is still a need to respond when children use baby talk.

Table 3: Factors Affecting the Oral Communication Skills of the Grade VI Learners Based on Their Reasons why They Commit the Error

| Articulation Disorder | Factors |
|--|--|
| 1. Imperfect production of phonetic elements/ mispronunciation | Lack reading experiences at home and in school |
| 2. distortion | lack guided reading experience in school and at home |
| 3. substitutions | Lack of reading strategies being employed in school |
| 4. omission of certain speech sound | Carelessness in reading |
| 5. baby talk | Physical disorder (short tongue) |

As gleaned in the table, the most common factor underlying the different articulation disorder is the "lack of reading experience in school and at home". This goes with the adage "practice makes perfect"; wherein, one must exercise a skill to achieve a desirable outcome.

'Reading experience in school' is considered a factor for it lacks reading materials like books and the like. With this situation, the researcher opted to request from charitable foundations to donate books. Fortunately, Give and Restore Hope Children's Charity (GRHCC) donated a sum of 430 story books to be used by all learners of the school.

The books were borrowed by the learners of the school. Designated Learning Resource Coordinator facilitates the lending of books.

'Reading experience at home' is also considered a factor because based from the conducted home visitation by the researcher thru an interview with their parents, majority of the parents of the frustration readers are 'no read, no write'. With this situation, the researcher opted to conduct remedial reading among these learners during break time (lunch break and dismissal).

This is proven by Dingil (2012) where she found out that pupils have not acquired the minimum competencies in reading due to lack of reading experiences which is brought by the insufficient number of reading materials in school and at home and subsequently leads learners not to be interested with it.

This is parallel to the findings of Wartem (2010) which she cited that one of the problems that affect the communication competence of students is the lack of instructional materials like that of reading materials.

In addition, Vallejo (2012) also stated that "lack of teaching materials" is the most common factor which affected her learners' reading comprehension.

Due to the insufficiency of instructional/reading materials in school, Domingo (2016) revealed that learners do not love and enjoy reading already.

Intervening Activities which helped the learners minimize the errors on the articulation disorder which they committed the highest number of errors.

The researcher planned and implemented a reading intervention program entitled: "Project: Enhancing the Ability to Read" (EAR) under the supervision of the Department of Education, Schools Division of Tabuk City.

The following were some of the activities conducted to improve the reading ability of the learners:

1. Word Wall. The researcher/reading teacher posted a list of words on the wall to be read by the learners. With the presence of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), he or she will guide the Less Knowledgeable Other (LKO) to read the words posted on the wall.

2. Scheduled guided reading by the stakeholders and teachers among the learners. Aside from the reading teacher, other volunteer stakeholders came to

share their expertise in teaching reading among the learners.

The reading teacher requested stakeholders (internal/ external) to assist in teaching reading among those frustrated and non-reader learners during their free time in school or even at home.

3. A Page a Day. With the use of story books donated by the Give and Restore Hope Children's Charity (GRHCC) foundation which the reading teacher tied up with, the learners were exposed to reading a page of a book in a day with the assistance of the reading teacher. To monitor their understanding of what they read; a simple journal will be filled up by them. Writing the elements of the story and new words is read which allows them to understand these words as a way of enriching their vocabulary skill.

4. Encouraging pupils to talk to the reading teacher. This is a sort of reflection among the learners on what they enjoy most in life. It is done through a question-and-answer portion after reading a short selection.

5. Vocabulary building and phonics practice. Through definition and use of picture clues, the teacher let the learners master the meaning of a word and do sounding out each letter of the word being introduced.

6. Computer-Assisted Instructions and Activities for Reading Comprehension Skills. Readers were given interactive activities thru computers. They were provided positive feedback for correct answers and shows which are wrong word and ask the learners to choose another word until they score in the activity.

Of the 6 cited intervening activities for reading development, they most enjoyed the Computer-Assisted Instructions (CAI) and Activities for Reading Comprehension Skills due to its interactive effects among the learners.

The Reading Teacher was able to design an interactive vocabulary enrichment activity using pictures. Learners were given the chance to choose which best describes the thing contained in the picture.

This coincides with what Arnold (2000) found out in his study; wherein, CAI can dramatically increase a student's access to information. Moreover, computer learning experiences often engage the interest of students, motivating them to learn and increase independence and personal responsibility for education.

In addition to this, Dalal and Rani (2013) stated that CAI makes learning a joyful experience. They love to click the course and see pictorial representations and they welcome this kind of joyful method of learning.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Some of the learners are not well-versed enough in reading sight words because they committed different errors along the articulation disorders. This is so because they are not immersed in reading due to weak or irregular conduct of reading drills in the school and at home. To determine the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the learners, teachers should administer oral reading assessment.

Imperfect production of phonetic elements or mispronunciation as the most common errors committed. Specifically, on pronouncing words with long /a/, soft /th/, and vowels 'ou' with schwa /ə/ sound. On the other hand, they are mostly aware of not reading with baby talk disorder.

With this, learners must be given varied meaningful learning tasks or exercises in oral reading containing the less mastered competency/ies.

The most common factor affecting the oral communication skills of the learners is "lack of reading experience in school and at home". As a remedy, teachers should innovate in making a workbook in reading containing sight words with long /a/, soft /th/, and schwa /ə/ sound of vowels 'ou' as well as varied activities or exercises to hone their reading skills.

To minimize or avoid the errors in oral communication, intervening activities such as the following may be implemented: Word Wall, scheduled guided reading by the stakeholders and teachers among the learners, A Page A Day, encouraging pupils to talk to the reading teacher, Vocabulary building and phonics practice, and Computer-Assisted Instructions and Activities for Reading Comprehension Skills.

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