

Speaking Competence of Senior High School Graduates towards the Development and Evaluation of Job Readiness Training Program for BPO Industry

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ABSTRACT

The English proficiency of Senior High School (SHS) graduates has been a topic of concern, due to its importance in the job market. While local studies show that many SHS graduates have a high level of English proficiency, it remains unclear if this level meets industry standards for employability. In contrast, international assessments by organizations like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the Education First (EF), and the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry suggest a decline in English proficiency among graduates.

Dealing with the issue of English proficiency is a matter of national importance that requires further examination to determine if the speaking abilities of Filipino graduates, particularly SHS graduates, meet industry standards for employability. This study aimed at assessing the speaking competence of SHS graduates, pinpointing areas where they struggle in speaking English, and identifying opportunities and resources they believe can enhance their speaking skills. Based on the findings, a language training program was developed to help prepare SHS graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to improve their speaking abilities and compete effectively in the BPO industry.

Quantitative research method was utilized due to its speed, accuracy, and accessibility. Respondents participated in the modified online speaking test, where its results were treated using weighted mean, standard deviation, and ranking method. The study on SHS graduates' speaking proficiency revealed a general average of 2.02, indicating 'Basic Proficiency,' which falls short of the expected competency levels set by BPO companies at 3.00 for 'Moderate Proficiency' or 5.00 for 'Expert Proficiency.' The findings also showed that collectively, the respondents lacked the speaking skills to be deemed prepared for employment in the BPO as indicated by their performance in the speaking test and the established benchmark set by the BPO companies.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

English holds significance beyond its status as the most widely spoken language, as it serves as the predominant language within the corporate realm. Having a good command of English opens up job opportunities for individuals. With jobs requiring a high level of English proficiency, senior high school graduates need to be able to communicate confidently and fluently in English to effectively compete for desired positions. Since most job interviews are conducted in English, not being able to communicate in this language can lead to missed opportunities. Proficiency in English is also key to advancing one's career (Gan, 2023). Using English at work brings added benefits like contributing to the organization's success, building relationships with colleagues and clients, enhancing one's skills, increasing one's remuneration, improving one's skillset, and promoting cultural awareness for better international connections.

Given the importance of English in the workplace, the English proficiency levels of high school graduates have come under scrutiny, raising questions about their readiness for the job market. Despite these concerns, various local studies on high school students have shown that many have achieved advanced levels of English

proficiency. However, these local studies must determine if students claiming to have an advanced level of proficiency meet the industry standards for employability. These positive findings seem to conflict with the results of assessments carried out by known organizations like Educational Testing Service (ETS), Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and Education First (EF), which suggest a decrease in English language skills among Filipino graduates (Baclig, 2020; Enerio, 2018). These local studies also go against feedback from the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, where only 5% of call center job applicants out of a hundred are actually hired, as reported by the Information Technology and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP) (Declining of English Proficiency in the Philippines, 2018). The low hiring rate highlights a growing mismatch, between the proficiency required by industries and the abilities of graduates, making it increasingly tough for some senior high school graduates to succeed in the job market.

Additionally, with the number of unemployed Filipinos reaching 2.237 million as of March 2023 (Cordero, 2023), competition has become even more intense. The decrease in English language proficiency among Filipino graduates might also have an impact on the country's ability to compete in the global market, as highlighted by the previous Department of Education (DepEd) secretary. She noted that the K-12 curriculum, meant to prepare Filipino Senior High School (SHS) graduates with globally competitive skills, has yet to live up to its promise of enhancing job opportunities (Antonio, 2023).

Dealing with the issue of proficiency in speaking skills is a matter of national importance that requires further examination to assess if the speaking abilities of Filipino graduates, particularly SHS graduates, meet industry standards for employability. This study aims to assess the speaking competence of SHS graduates, pinpoint areas where they struggle in speaking English, and identify opportunities and resources they believe can enhance their speaking skills. Based on the findings, a language training program will be developed to help prepare SHS graduates with the knowledge and skills to improve their speaking abilities and compete effectively in the BPO industry.

The employability readiness of SHS graduates depends on their communication skills. Therefore, the outcomes of this study are crucial for developing job readiness training programs. Mainly it focuses on an aspect of being employable, like having communication skills, which are vital in today's job market. By assessing the speaking competence of SHS graduates, the results could be used as a benchmark to design a job language readiness training program that meets certain language standards for employment. Proficiency in English speaking is increasingly important as the business world becomes more globalized in industries such as business process outsourcing (BPO). The research outcomes could influence the content of a job readiness training program by showing if high school graduates can communicate effectively according to industry standards. Moreover, the findings could highlight areas needing improvement or development, allowing for tailored training programs to enhance employability. They would also offer insights to teachers on which aspects of speaking skills need focus for improving students' abilities. Additionally, the findings could guide the Department of Education (DepEd) in adjusting curricula to match industry demands and produce job-ready high school graduates. Furthermore, these research outcomes help set standards for speaking proficiency that Filipino graduates must achieve to be deemed ready for employment. These criteria should align with the norms commonly practiced in industries, like BPO, and adhere to standards such as the CEFR. This research could serve as a guide for creating job readiness training programs that are focused and efficient, guaranteeing that senior high school graduates are well-equipped for industry requirements to broaden their employment opportunities.

In essence, this research serves as a guide to creating job readiness training programs for high school graduates, equipping them with the skills needed in the industry, opening up job prospects, and potentially reducing unemployment rates while boosting competitiveness and economic development.

Research Questions

1. What is the respondents' speaking competence in terms of:

- 1.1 pronunciation;
 - 1.2 fluency;
 - 1.3 grammar;
 - 1.4 vocabulary; and
 - 1.5 comprehension?
2. To what extent does the respondents' speaking competence match the BPO standard for employability?
 3. What specific components of speaking competence do respondents need to work on to increase their BPO job readiness?
 4. What opportunities and resources are needed by the respondents to ensure speaking competence for BPO job readiness?
 5. What language training program could be developed based on the findings?
 6. What is the experts' evaluation of the developed language training program for BPO job readiness?

Objectives

This study aimed at assessing the speaking competence of SHS graduates, pinpointing areas where they struggle in speaking English, and identifying opportunities and resources they believe can enhance their speaking skills.

LITERATURE SURVEY

With over 1.5 billion speakers, English has substantial effects on global economies, businesses, employment, and communication (The Most Spoken Languages Worldwide, 2023).

Improving one's English skills is linked to an increase in the income of countries. While some Asian nations like Japan argue that adopting English as a language does not impact economic progress, this view is countered by examples such as Singapore (Li et al., 2020). Singapore, which uses English as its language, has leveraged it to boost its growth independently, making it the fourth-highest GDP per capita globally (Worldometer, 2017, as cited in Ozaki, 2021). As emphasized by Grenier and Zhang (2021), when people can communicate in the same language, it positively affects their economic wellbeing.

The economic significance of English cannot be overstated. In the BPO sector, proficiency in the English language plays a role in facilitating smooth communication between BPO employees and clients, allowing for clear articulation of thoughts, efficient problem-solving, and prompt resolution of customer concerns. Clients highly value BPO employees who can comprehend and address their inquiries effectively, with fluency in English being essential to meet these expectations.

As client expectations escalate, their preference for English speakers with near-native levels has heightened the standards for language skills among job seekers in the BPO industry (Crismundo, 2018). This proficiency is assessed regularly by BPO firms to ensure and maintain excellent customer support from call center agents (CCAs). Good English proficiency allows CCAs to communicate clearly, show empathy, and build relationships with clients, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty to the brand. On the other hand, a lack of fluency can result in difficulties in understanding technical details, which may lead to ineffective problem-solving, incorrect issue identification, and misunderstandings. These scenarios could lead customers to become frustrated or upset (Torrecampo, 2013). Furthermore, there is a risk of customers ending phone conversations (Chazal, 2014), escalating calls to the United States (Racoma, 2014), and questioning the credibility of the BPO company (Willis, 2017), all harming service quality and the company's reputation.

Despite changes in the education system like the K–12 program implementation, there has been a decline in English proficiency among Filipino graduates. Due to this, SHS graduates might encounter challenges in securing employment, but if they focus on enhancing their speaking abilities which is a requirement for call center roles, they could secure positions in the BPO companies.

While local studies have shown promising outcomes, it remains to be seen whether the students' high proficiency in English speaking meets the standards for employability in business process outsourcing (BPO). Furthermore, their findings conflict with assessments from CEFR, TOEIC, Education First, and Business Process Association of the Philippines (BPAP) which suggest a decline in proficiency among graduates (Baclig, 2020; Enerio, 2018).

The existing literature underscores a research gap, indicating the need for a more comprehensive study. In essence, while local research has shown promising outcomes regarding the speaking skills of SHS students, there needs to be more clarity on whether these skills meet the requirements for employment in the BPO industry. Moreover, the difference between what local studies have found and recognized assessments like CEFR, TOEIC, and evaluations by industry groups such as BPAP is worrying. This inconsistency highlights the need for an investigation to determine the proficiency levels of SHS graduates and how they measure up to industry standards. Filling this knowledge gap is crucial for educational institutions, policymakers, and the BPO sector to make informed choices about shaping curricula, preparing the workforce, and enhancing competitiveness in the industry. Therefore, conducting further research becomes essential to bridge this gap and gain insights into SHS graduates' English proficiency levels as they prepare for BPO employment.

METHODOLOGY

To tackle the research questions at hand, a quantitative research method was utilized. This method produces data that can be easily interpreted using statistics and numerical data. Quantitative research is known for its speed, accuracy, and accessibility (Williams, 2021). By employing a quantitative research method, the researcher gathered information on respondents' speaking test scores to assess their speaking proficiency levels. The use of a cross-sectional research design alongside a quantitative method provided a structured framework for achieving the study's objectives.

A cross-sectional research design aids in understanding population characteristics and behaviors or opinions at a particular time (Hunziker & Blankenagel 2021). In this study, an online speaking test was used to evaluate respondents' speaking abilities and compare them against established BPO employability standards. The method used allowed for an assessment of the respondents' speaking skills, in comparison to the standards set by the BPO industry.

A purposive sampling was employed, where respondents were selected based on the desired attributes of the study. The desired respondents must be, must be Filipino citizens, SHS graduates of 2023, have not yet enrolled in college, and are looking for employment in the BPO industry. Vijayamohan (2023) mentioned that this technique is cost-effective and yields insightful results.

By following the predetermined criteria, the recruitment of respondents began by contacting SHS advisers for referrals. Since only a few individuals were generated from this strategy because the target respondents had graduated, the researcher opted to run free and paid Facebook advertisements for 45 days. The combined strategies generated 57 individuals who accomplished the Google Forms. Unfortunately, only 9 of them proceeded to take the online speaking assessment. Some of the target respondents withdrew their participation in the speaking assessment due to various reasons such as unstable internet connection, speaking test anxiety or nervousness, health issues, and unsuitable for the set criteria for the desired respondents of the study. Even though it means a smaller sample size, the researcher decided to work with the pool of individuals that was accessible under the current circumstances.

To ensure the safety and privacy of the respondents, the researcher prioritized confidentiality during data collection. Detailed information was provided to respondents about safeguarding their privacy without revealing details such, as names, schools, email addresses, or any other identifiable information that could

impact their willingness to provide responses. All sensitive respondent data will be promptly deleted after the study concludes.

DISCUSSION

Level of the Speaking Competence of Respondents (Pronunciation)

N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	0	10	1.33	0.00	No Proficiency

The result indicates a lack of speaking competence regarding pronunciation among respondents, primarily due to difficulties in articulating English sounds and placing stress on syllables within words. According to the research findings of Nurvita et al. (2019), SHS students exhibited pronunciation issues linked to innate inflexibility in their speech sound production mechanisms. The tense muscles associated with speech production are not finely tuned enough to adapt to the sounds of English. Another common issue noted among respondents was the emphasis placed on syllables, in words as highlighted by Nuraini (2024). His research found that respondents struggled with placing stress on syllables in verbs, nouns, or adjectives. Some languages, including English, emphasize syllables more than others within words. This pronunciation aspect is crucial as placing stress on the syllable can change a word's meaning and impact communication.

The findings underscore the need to improve pronunciation skills, as struggles with English sounds and syllable stress hinder clear communication. Enhancing pronunciation is essential for BPO job readiness, where precise articulation can prevent misunderstandings.

Level of the Speaking Competence of Respondents (Fluency)

N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	0	10	1.89	0.60	Basic Proficiency

The outcome shows that the participants still exhibit speaking ability at levels below the BPO's desired recruiting standard for 'Moderate Proficiency.' Various factors such as too much hesitation; excessive use of fillers such as "ah," "ano," "hmm," "uhm," and "what;" awkward and prolonged pauses; and unnecessary repetition of words and phrases during the speaking assessment contributed to deficiency in the fluency of the respondents. Speech challenges like stuttering and stammering while speaking in English are also noted among senior high school students (Bastida & Yap, 2019). These obstacles can impede communication, thereby diminishing language effectiveness.

The results highlight fluency issues like hesitation, filler words, and awkward pauses, which impact respondents' ability to speak confidently and clearly. This indicates a need for training in maintaining smooth and uninterrupted speech, crucial for customer interactions in BPO roles.

Level of the Speaking Competence of Respondents (Grammar)

N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	0	10	1.44	0.53	No Proficiency

It is evidently indicated in the result that the speaking competence of the respondents concerning grammar falls below the BPO's desired recruitment standard. Grammatical errors, including subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, and sentence structure are acknowledged as interferences, as mentioned by Erdogan (2005 cited in Fontillas et al., 2019). These interferences undoubtedly stemmed from respondents' limited exposure and lack of knowledge of the target language. SHS graduates who are interested in call center jobs must work on their

grammar, given that the jobs require constant communication with English-speaking customers. That being the case, grammar can help them convey to the customers their intended message, achieve clear communication, and avoid misunderstandings (Gallimore, 2023). Remember that success in addressing clients' inquiries and problems while leaving an impact on them hinges greatly on their grasp of and adherence to proper grammar rules when speaking English.

The identified grammar deficiencies, including errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence structure, stress the importance of reinforcing grammar knowledge. Correct grammar is vital for delivering accurate information and fostering clear communication with clients.

Level of the Speaking Competence of Respondents (Vocabulary)

N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	0	10	1.44	0.73	No Proficiency

The respondents struggled to convey their thoughts and opinions during the speaking assessment due to limited vocabulary and word choices. Milton (2009 cited in Rayla and Sonsona, 2021) emphasized the significance of expanding one's vocabulary, especially a range of vocabulary that resonates with native English speakers which is crucial for those aspiring to work in BPO roles. Grothaus (2017) mentioned that a rich vocabulary facilitates smooth interactions with English-speaking clients, particularly when discussing company products or services, addressing queries, or resolving concerns. This enhances customers' willingness to engage further with the call center agents upon hearing spoken English using words or phrases that they can grasp easily.

Limited vocabulary emerged as a barrier to effective communication. Strengthening vocabulary is crucial for SHS graduates to express ideas clearly and confidently, especially in handling customer queries and resolving concerns in BPO settings.

Level of the Speaking Competence of Respondents (Comprehension)

N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD	Interpretation
9	0	10	4.00	0.50	High Proficiency

This result is aligned with studies conducted by Contillo-Galang (2022) which highlighted an above mastery of the English language among senior high school respondents, specifically in reading comprehension. The commendable level of proficiency could also be linked to the utilization of online video content (Cua, 2024). For many Filipino internet users, online video content serves as a significant educational tool. Engaging with online English video materials aids in enhancing their comprehension due to its visual context, thereby reinforcing their grasp of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and other real-life scenarios while providing exposure to diverse accents and speech patterns leading to improvements in comprehension and other linguistic abilities.

The positive outcome in comprehension reveals strengths in understanding and interpreting English content. This skill is critical for effective customer interaction, enabling employees to respond accurately to client concerns and instructions.

Extent of the Speaking Competence of Respondents in Reference to BPO Standard for Employability

	Average Mean Score	BPO Standard	Interpretation
Respondents	2.02		Basic Proficiency
Teleperformance		3.00	Moderate Proficiency

iQor		3.00	Moderate Proficiency
Teletech		5.00	Expert Proficiency

The results indicate an inadequacy in the respondents' speaking competence across aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension with an average score of 2.02. This falls short of the expected competency level of 3.00 or 5.00 set by the three BPO companies. It suggests that the respondents collectively lack the speaking competence needed for employment in the BPO industry when their performance in the speaking test is compared with the BPO's language standards. The outcome is aligned with the results of international assessments conducted by CEFR, Education First, TOEIC, and Business Process Association of the Philippines (BPAP), indicating a continuous decline in English proficiency among Filipino graduates (Baclig, 2020). Due to this concerning trend, many BPO companies opt to hire candidates who may not be fully qualified but are available to meet their staffing needs despite the higher training costs involved. These candidates often require longer language training to enhance their skills and must pass multiple assessments before handling client calls (Accenture near-hire training and employment facilitation program, 2021).

The below-standard performance indicates that SHS graduates lack the speaking skills required for immediate employment in BPO roles. This result highlights the need for targeted training programs to bridge these gaps.

Specific Components of Respondents' Speaking Competence That Need Enhancement for BPO Job Readiness

	Average Score	Interpretation
Pronunciation	1.33	No Proficiency
Fluency	1.89	Basic Proficiency
Vocabulary	1.44	No Proficiency
Grammar	1.44	No Proficiency

Based on the findings, it is noticeable that the respondents consistently struggle with pronunciation, which is typically attributed to articulation and stress. The respondents faced challenges with producing the correct sounds in English, particularly short vowels, long vowels, diphthong, and critical consonant sounds such as like /f/, /p/, /v/, /z/, /θ/, and /ð/. They tend to replace components, such as substituting /p/ with /f/, /v/ with /b/, /s/ with /z/ and vice versa. Furthermore, senior high school graduates often struggled with articulating voiced /ð/ and unvoiced /θ/ sounds, sometimes opting for substitutions involving a /t/ or a /d/. This frequent swapping of sounds can pose comprehension challenges for some native English speakers (Pachina, 2019). Respondents also mixed up short vowels with long vowels and diphthongs and vice versa, indicating a noticeable pattern. The incorrect articulation of English sounds by Filipino speakers is linked to issues like mouth opening, tongue placement, and lip formation during speech (Ingielly, 2021). It was also revealed that respondents had challenges with properly placing emphasis on certain syllables in words, leading to mispronouncing some of the words. While English language learners focus on mastering vowel and consonant sounds in speech, neglecting stress can still lead to communication challenges.

With the exception of comprehension, the average fluency score shows improvement compared to other aspects of speaking competence; however, there are still areas for improvement. These findings are aligned with the study of Cariño et al. (2018), where most respondents in this study encountered extended and awkward pauses, utilized filler words like 'ah,' 'ano,' 'uhm,' 'hmm,' and 'what,' showed hesitation, and at times repeated words, highlighting challenges in fluency among SHS students,

Limited vocabulary was responsible for respondents' difficulty expressing their thoughts when answering an open-ended question. This result is similar to the study of Fitriani et al. (2015), showing challenges in oral skills among respondents due to a deficiency in vocabulary and a problem with recognizing words and using correct words. Tuyen (2021) emphasized that individuals with restricted vocabulary may also have limited ability for comprehension. As a consequence, they may face obstacles in expressing themselves effectively, making communication beyond the bounds of possibility. Also, unfamiliarity with verb tenses, sentence structures, and subject and verb agreement is connected to students' grammar skills and their ability to speak effectively (Zam et al., 2021).

The identified weaknesses in pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary emphasize key areas where enhancement efforts should be concentrated. This ensures that future interventions directly address the most critical language issues.

Opportunities and Resources for Ensuring Speaking Competence for BPO Job Readiness

Opportunities and Strategies for Improving English Competence	Number of Selections	Ranking
Reading aloud	9	1
Finding an English language conversation partner	7	2
Accessing free English language proficiency programs	7	2
Utilizing language learning technology	7	2
Self-talking strategy in front of a mirror	6	5
Watching English-language programs	5	6
Joining English clubs	4	7
Language mentoring from teachers	3	8
Implementing English-only policy	2	9

Based on the provided list of opportunities and resources, 'Reading aloud' was favored by all respondents. A few research studies have shown that learners prefer 'Reading aloud' to enhance their speaking skills (Supraba et al., 2020). Badawi et al. (2021) stressed how reading aloud activities can improve pronunciation. The studies of Sajid and Kassim (2019) highlighted its impact on grammar skills. Syiyami et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of reading aloud in enhancing fluency. Additionally, Al Dawaghreh and Kurum (2021) noted its value in broadening vocabulary, while Panjaitan et al. (2023) indicated its role in enhancing comprehension skills. Anjasmara and Wijayanto (2023) also stated that reading aloud helps lessen learners' nervousness when speaking English. On the other hand, 'Implementing an English-only policy (EOP) at school or classroom settings was not a popular choice among respondents for enhancing their speaking skills. Regrettably, some studies view EOP as ineffective due to its negative outcomes, including flawed sentence structure posing challenges for learners to utilize correct grammar and vocabulary. Aside from acting as a barrier to fluency, EOP also contributes to increased anxiety among learners. Wei (2013) found that implementing EOP enhanced learners' listening and speaking abilities; however, there were challenges arising from the limitations of this policy on teacher and student interactions. The strict requirement to use English made it harder for learners to grasp sentences especially in reading or speaking contexts, leading to confusion. Chee (2023) also emphasized that imposing EOP can be seen as restrictive in nature and may not effectively motivate learners, thereby hindering their progress in improving their skills.

The preference for 'Reading Aloud' suggests it as a highly effective tool for improving pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Conversely, the lack of enthusiasm for English-only policies reflects a need for alternative strategies that reduce anxiety while promoting English language practice.

Language Training Program Development Based on the Findings

	Speaking Competence Mean Score	BPO Standard	Interpretation
Respondents	2.02	3.00	Basic Proficiency
Teleperformance		3.00	Moderate Proficiency
iQor		3.00	Moderate Proficiency
Teletch		5.00	Expert Proficiency

The development of a tailored English language training program for BPO job readiness was shaped significantly by the findings from the speaking test. With the general average of 2.02, the speaking test results offered perspectives about the SHS graduates' current level of speaking competence which was found to be below the language employability level of 3.00 or 5.00 set by the three BPO companies. The speaking test results also highlighted strengths and weaknesses in their speaking competence, paving the way for a training program development that focuses on addressing lapses in areas like pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Utilizing the assessment data, such as test results, can contribute to developing effective training programs according to Clark (2010, as cited in Arabi, 2020). Additionally, the speaking test outcomes played a role in setting improvement benchmarks and achievable targets for SHS graduates. By understanding their present proficiency levels, interventions and activities were tailored within the training program to help enhance their speaking skills progressively.

The results directly influenced the creation of a targeted training program designed to improve speaking skills in line with BPO standards. By addressing identified weaknesses, this program aims to boost graduates' employability.

Evaluation of Experts in the Developed Language Training Program for BPO Job Readiness

Indicators	Average Rating
Pre-Training Assessment	4
Speaking Competence Rubric	4
Role-Playing Scenarios	4
Pronunciation Drills	4
Fluency Drills	4
Grammar Exercises	4
Vocabulary Exercises	4
Mock Interviews	4
Post-Training Assessment	4
Clarity	4
Organization	4
Completeness	4
General Average	4

With 12 indicators rated on a scale from 1 to 4, the experts' evaluation of the developed training program shows an average rating of 4 for 'Very Satisfied.' This implies that the training program for BPO job readiness successfully passed the experts' evaluation with the highest approval. The feedback and suggestions provided by experts were taken into account to improve the program in addressing any shortcomings in speaking skills among respondents to align with BPO language standards for employability and enhance SHS graduates' speaking abilities for success in the industry. As noted by Andales (2024), evaluating training programs ensures that their content addresses the skill gaps among respondents. Likewise, involving stakeholders, such as industry and academic experts in evaluations is one way of ensuring that the developed training program achieves its desired outcomes (Arabi, 2020).

The high rating from experts signifies that the developed training program is effective in addressing the identified skill gaps. This validation confirms the program's potential to enhance SHS graduates' speaking skills for successful employment in the BPO industry.

CONCLUSIONS

1.1 Respondents' difficulties pronouncing words correctly are a result of their exposure to and impact from the phonetics of the Filipino language, specifically concerning vowel and consonant sounds and syllable stress patterns.

1.2 Fluency issues arise from respondents who do not have enough opportunity to speak in English.

1.3 The lack of a comprehensive understanding of English grammar leads to issues that affect the clarity or accuracy of respondents' intended message.

1.4 The difficulty of respondents speaking in English stems from their poor reading habits and reluctance to utilize dictionaries, resulting in their limited vocabulary and lack of word choice.

1.5 Exposure to online video content where respondents are provided with visual and auditory cues, real-life examples, and different perspectives positively affects their comprehension level.

2. Respondents' deepest exposure to Filipino phonetics, limited opportunities for speaking practice, inadequate understanding of English grammar, and poor reading habits are all contributing factors to their deficiency in speaking competence, making them unfit for employment in the BPO industry.

3. By focusing on the critical vowel and consonant sounds, learning the proper placement of stress on words, reducing awkward pauses and fillers, expanding vocabulary, and fixing grammar errors, respondents can eventually enhance their speaking competence in English for BPO job readiness.

4. Incorporating individualized and comprehensive approaches in language learning is highlighted by the range of strategies and resources that can be used to improve speaking competence for BPO job readiness.

5. Developing a customized English language training program for job readiness is based on the assessment results to tailor the program and address respondents' deficiencies in speaking competence.

6. Ensuring that the training program can address the identified gaps in the respondents' speaking competence based on the speaking test results can receive acceptance or approval from the academe and industry experts.

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