

# DETERMINANTS OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AMONG THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aimed to determine the “Determinants of the English Speaking Performance among the first year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry”.*

*Descriptive method of research was used with a questionnaire as the instrument utilized to gather the needed data. 1) What is the percentage level of English speaking performance in term of grade? 2) What is the perceived mean level of motivation in speaking in terms of Integrative and instrumental motivation? 3) What is the perceived level of the following Classroom activities (Brainstorming, Pair/ group work, Interviews/ Surveys, Role-playing, Problem- Solving)? 4) Do students’ profile, their motivation in speaking and Classroom activities significantly affect their English speaking performance?.*

**Keywords:** *Determinants, English Speaking, Performance, the first year students, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the course of teaching, the researcher has found that students always translate from Vietnamese into English before they speak; therefore, it makes them difficult to express their opinions in English. There is a big influence of Vietnamese language on the students’ learning. Students create big trouble with pronunciation when they learn English because spelling and pronunciation are very different. Moreover, Vietnamese students lack motivation in learning English. Mother tongue also affect heavily because Vietnam students come from different provinces where they usually use mother tongue, which is easy to use and understand. There is an importance of investigating the relationship between performances and motivation.

Relatively, activities in the classroom affect the English speaking performance very much. When a teacher has good certificate and good experience to apply many teaching techniques she/he can be a good manager in her/his class. She/He will be success in applying a lot of activities which make students more willing to learn language and active to take part in the lessons.

Traditional method, teachers usually explain, learners listen and take notes. They rarely talk. They do exercises, read textbook, answer the questions, and fill in the gaps.... In addition, they sometimes read aloud. However, they cannot speak English outside the classrooms. The researcher thinks about determinants, which may affect students’ speaking performance. Many students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry find speaking difficult for them. They may get good marks in grammar test but they say nothing when they meet foreigners who speak English. It is necessary to find the way in order to get the students’ attention to do all the speaking tasks.

Therefore, the researcher tried to investigate the determinants, which affect the speaking performance of the students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive method was used in this study inasmuch as it is the most appropriate method since it dealt with facts concerning the English Speaking Performance of the first year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

The descriptive method is appropriate whenever the object of any class varies among themselves and one is interested in knowing the extent to which a condition was obtained among these objects. (Clamoring, 2000). Furthermore, Santrock (2005) says that in descriptive method: “Its objectives are to describe systematically a

situation, condition or area of interest factually and accurately. Descriptive designs include observation, serves and interviews, standardized tests, and case studies". One hundred and forty five copies of the questionnaire were delivered and administered to 65 males and 80 females' students to investigate the problem.

**RESULTS:** some general information is gathered in the tables below

**Table 1. Profile of the Respondents in Term of Gender.**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	65	44.9
Female	80	55.1
<b>Total</b>	145	100

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in term of gender showed that 80 or 55.1 percent out of 145 students are female and 65 or 44.9 percent are male. It further indicates the major of grade 12 students are females with a frequency of 80 or 55.1 percent. Follow the correction in table 2.

**Table 2. Distribution of Respondents in Term of Final Mark in English Speaking**

Mark	Frequency	Percent	Description
90- 100	20	13.7	Excellent
80 -89	45	31	Very Good
65-79	32	22	Good
50-64	48	33.3	Fair
Mean: 73.02			
<b>Total</b>	145	100	

Distribution of Respondents in term of Final Mark in English Speaking was illustrated in table 2, twenty (20) or (13.7) % of the students obtained performance rating of 90 -100 verbally described as "excellent". With forty- five (45) or thirty one (31) % got 80-89 marks described as "Very good". Thirty two or (22) % got 65 - 79 which is verbally equivalent to "Good" while forty eight (48) or (33,3) % got "Fair" ratings of 50-64. The mean level of the respondents' marks is posted at 73.02 and the standard deviation 9, which indicates that the performance of the students was good. Follow the same correction in table 3.

**Table 3. Mean level of speaking motivation in term of Integrative Motivation**

Indicators I want to learn English...	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1. To communicate fluently with foreigners	3.7	1	Agree
2. To travel to other countries and study their culture	3.6	2	Agree
3. To know other English speaking countries	3.6	2	Agree
4. To understand thought, emotions and behavior of some great English great men (authors, philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, artists, etc.)	3.6	2	Agree
5. To appreciate speaking in English.	3.7	1	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>3.64</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.*

It can be seen in the table 3 that Integrative Motivation with regard to the students "agree" on the items enumerated with an average weighted mean of 3.64 among the five items number one "I want to learn English to

communicate fluently with foreigner” and number 5 “to appreciate speaking in English” was ranked first with a weighted mean of 3.7 described as agree. Number 2 “...to travel to other countries and study their culture” number 3 “...to know other English speaking countries” and number four “...to understand thought, emotions and behavior of some great English great men (authors, philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, artists, etc.) were rated 3.6 with “agree” description. . Therefore, integrative motivation is appreciated. Follow the same correction in table 4.

**Table 4. Mean Level of Speaking Motivation in Term of Instrumental Motivation**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
<i>I want to learn English...</i>			
1. To obtain a good job	4.2	2	Agree
2.To go abroad (study, job, seminars, conferences...)	4.3	1	Strongly agree
3. To get high salary.	4.2	2	Agree
4. To be promoted in a higher position	4.1	3	Agree
5. To be well known in the community or in the profession.	4.1	3	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>4.18</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.*

The Instrumental Motivation which is illustrated in table 4 shows that the student respondents “agree” on the indicated items such as statement number 2 “to go abroad (study, job, seminars, conferences...)” with a weighted mean of 4.18 on top of the list with a weighted mean is 4.3 obtained “strongly agree” statement number 4 “to be promoted in a higher position” and number 5 “To be well known in the community or in the profession” with a weighted mean of 4.1 obtained “Agree” rating of “agree” with a weighted mean of 4.2. The same interpretation of “agree” can be seen for the statement number 1 “to obtain a good job” and number 3 “...to get high salary” with a weighted mean of 4.2. Therefore Integrative Motivation really plays very important roles to help students learn and use language. Follow the same correction in table 5.

**Table 5. Brainstorming Mean Features of Classroom Activities**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1. Encourage creativity of thought	3.4	1	Agree
2. Appeal to reluctant speakers	3.1	4	Agree
3. Appeal to the more ‘physical’ learner	3.2	3	Agree
4. Reinforce understanding of language as a way to communicate meaning	3.4	1	Agree
5. Use to develop highly creative solutions to a problem.	3.3	2	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>3.35</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.*

Brainstorming was observed from the table 5 below with an average weighted mean of 3.35 signifies that the learners revealed by the verbal interpretation of “agree” appreciate Brainstorming in speaking. Statement number 1 “...Encourage creativity of thought” and number 4 “Reinforce understanding of language as a way to communicate meaning” got a descriptive rating of 3.4 with a remark of “agree”. Statement number 5 “Use to develop highly creative solutions to a problem” got a descriptive rating of 3.3 with a remark of “agree”. The respondents said that they “agree” with a weighted mean of 3.2 for number 3 “Appeal to the more ‘physical’ learner”. The “agree” remark was obtained for statement number 1 “...Appeal to reluctant speakers” with a weighted mean of 3.1. Follow the same correction in table 6.

**Table 6. Perceived Mean Features of Classroom Activities in Term of Pair/ Group work**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1. ...provide Students opportunities to talk more	3.7	3	Agree
2...give students the space to exchange idea	3.8	2	Agree
3. ...enhance team spirit	3.7	3	Agree
4. ....provide changes and variety	4.1	1	Agree
5....promote communicate interaction among learners	3.6	4	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>3.78</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.

The perceived mean in term of students' attitude toward Pair/ group work, can be seen from table 6 with an average weighted mean of 3.78 indicates that teaching and learning activities were enjoyed and appreciated as obtained, with the verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree”.

To elaborate, statement number 1 “Provide Students opportunities to talk more” got a weighted mean of 3.7, which is equivalent to the rating of “agree”. As for the statement number 2 “give students the space to exchange idea”, the respondent said that they “agree” with a weighted mean of 3.8 similarly, respondents remarked, “agree” in statement number 3 “...enhance team spirit” with a weighted mean of 3.7 and number 5 “...promote communicate interaction among learners” obtaining a weighted mean of 3.7. As revealed by statement number 4 “provide changes and variety” the respondents said that they “agree” with a weighted mean of 4.1. The findings imply that the student respondents agree that pair/group work helped them speak better. Follow the same correction in table 7.

**Table 7. Perceived Mean Features of Classroom Activities in Term of Interview/ Surveys**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1. ... reduce stress and anxiety.	4.2	2	Agree
2. ...promote students a lot.	3.5	4	Agree
3....strengthen cooperative learning, discussion groups, and functional activities.	4.3	1	Agree
4. ... represent a very powerful view of EFL curriculum.	4.2	2	Agree
5. ....promote students' social development.	4.2	2	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.

The perceived mean in term of students' attitude toward Interview/ Surveys, can be seen from table 7 with an average weighted mean of 4.1 indicates that teaching and learning activities were enjoyed and appreciated as obtained, with the verbal interpretation of “Strongly agree”.

To elaborate, statement number 1 “Provide Students opportunities to talk more” got a weighted mean of 4.1, which is equivalent to the rating of “agree”. As for the statement number 3 “strengthen cooperative learning, discussion groups, and functional activities” obtained a weighted mean of 4.3 on the top of the list with description as “strongly agree” the respondents said that they “agree” with a weighted mean of 4.2 for number 1 “reduce stress and anxiety.”, number 4 “represent a very powerful view of EFL curriculum.” and number 5 “....promote students’

social development” respondents remarked “agree” in statement number 2 “promote students a lot.” with a weighted mean of 3.5 The findings imply that the student respondents agree that Interview/ Surveys encouraged them speak better. Follow the same correction in table 8.

**Table 8. Perceived Mean Features of Classroom Activities in Term of Role- Play**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1...encourages me to write to find real readers and I feel like writing very much.	3.9	3	Agree
2...uses variety of techniques such as discussions, reading, debate, brainstorming and list- making, so I can have opportunity to explore a topic fully.	3.6	2	Agree
3...provide vocabulary and structures related, which helps me easy to write an outline.	3.6	2	Agree
4...give evaluation and feedback during a creative process so I can arrange my ideas logically.	4.2	2	Agree
5...focus on the process not only the final product so I am not afraid to express my ideas.	4.3	1	SA
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>3.92</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.*

As can be gleaned from table 8 the verbal interpretation of “agree” this suggests that the Role-playing in terms of teaching has all the items obtained mean score of 3.92 reveals that correspond to significant effect on speaking performance, statement number 5 “...focuses on the process not only the final product so I am not afraid to express my ideas.” got weighted mean of 4.3 on the top of the list with verbal interpretation of “strongly agree”. As revealed a mean score of 3.9 for number one “encourages me to write to find real readers and I feel like writing very much” and the remark of “agree”. Likewise, statement number two “...uses variety of techniques such as discussions, reading, debate, brainstorming and list- making, so I can have opportunity “ and number three “...provides vocabulary and structures related, which helps me easy to write an outline. .” got a descriptive rating of “agree” with the obtained mean score of 3.6 . Statement number 4 “gives evaluation and feedback during a creative process so I can arrange my ideas logically.” with a recorded mean score of 4.2 with the remark of “agree”. . It is assumed that most of the students are very much interested in Role-play It helps them to be more active to learn the language. Follow the same correction in table 9.

**Table 9. Perceived Mean Features of Classroom Activities in Term of Problem-solving**

Indicators	WM	Rank	Interpretation
1. ...encourage creativity of thoughts	3.9	3	Agree
2. ....appeal to reluctant speakers	3.6	5	Agree
3. ...appeal to the more ‘physical’ learner	3.7	4	Agree
4. ...reinforce understanding of language as a way to communicate meaning	4.2	2	Agree
5...are used to develop highly creative solutions to a problem.	4.3	1	Agree
<b>Average weighted mean</b>	<b>3.94</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Legend: 4.21 - 5.0 strongly agree; 3.41 - 4.20 agree; 2.61 - 3.40 moderate agree; 1.81 - 2.60 disagree; 1.0 - 1.80 strongly disagree.*

To elaborate, statement number 5 “are used to develop highly creative solutions to a problem” got a weighted mean of 4.3 on the top of the list with description as “strongly agree”. As for the statement number 4

“...reinforce understanding of language as a way to communicate meaning” obtained a weighted mean of 4.2 which is equivalent to the rating of, “agree”

The respondents said that they “agree” with a weighted mean of 3.9 for number one “encourage creativity of thoughts.” and number 3 “...appeal to the more ‘physical’ learner” got weighted mean of 3.7. Number 2 “... appeal to reluctant speakers” obtained a weighted mean of 3.6 the findings imply that the student respondents agree that Problem-solving encouraged them speak better. Follow the same correction in table 10.

**Table 10. Test of Correlation for the Relationship between the Motivational Factors and Students’ Speaking Performance**

Variables tested for relationship	r-value	P-value	Verbal interpretation
Gender	5.562	0.135	NS
Integrative Motivation	16.050	0.373	NS
Instrumental Motivation	25.827	0.637	NS
Brainstorming	13.806	0.273	NS
Pair/ group work	13.934	0.378	NS
Interview/ Surveys	22.095	0.050	S
Role- play	24.519	0.038	S
Problem-Solving	13.806	0.114	NS

p>.05-not significant      p< .05-significant

The findings revealed that significant relationship exist between students’ speaking performance and perceived level of classroom activities with regards to interviews/surveys and role-playing with p-values of 0.050 and 0.038 respectively being less than the threshold value of 0.05 level. Gender, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, brainstorming, pair/group work and problem solving with p-values of 0.135, 0.373, 0.673, 0.27, 0.378 and 0.114.respectively being greater than the threshold value of 0.05 level are found not significant. It implies that not all variables used in this study can significantly affect the students speaking performance; hence the hypothesis posited in the study is partially rejected. The study confirms the earlier findings in the study of Huang (1999) that states “Role-plays are very important in the Communicative Approach because they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles”.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings generated from the analysis and interpretation data the hypothesis that the profile of students, their motivation in speaking (Integrative Motivation and Instrumental Motivation) and Classroom activities (Brainstorming, Pair/ group work, Interview/ Surveys, Role-play, Problem- Solving) have no significant effect on their speaking performance is partially rejected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Teachers of English language should use communicative classroom activities to adapt to the needs of the learners; hence, it is recommended that education officials should give them more seminars, workshops on Teaching Speaking.
2. An English language classroom may be made a venue to develop students’ speaking skill through teacher’s techniques such as, role-play, survey, information gap, pair work /group work and problem solving.
3. It is timely that teachers of English may pay attention to students’ motivation in teaching speaking, so they may properly address and consider students’ language needs.
4. Varied approaches should be introduced to enhance students’ speaking.
5. Teachers should pay attention on the needs of the students especially those who meet problem in speaking.
6. More frequent evaluation to students’ speaking on accuracy and fluency, pronunciation, and organization of ideas, they should be resourceful and find suitable material in teaching speaking, because it is really an important skill.

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