

COMMON DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH SPEAKING OF ENGLISH MAJORED FRESHMEN AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

When learning English, speaking is a difficult skill for English learners to master. They often make mistakes when speaking, especially for first-year English majors. Consequently, this study entitled “*Common difficulties in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University*” is conducted to figure out some common difficulties in the speaking skills of the students. In this research, a questionnaire embraced 16 questions, including questions and statements which are used as the main instruments to collect the data. The participants in this study are 55 English-majored freshmen course 17 at Tay Do University. The results of the study will be analyzed to point out that the English-majored freshmen had some common difficulties and difficulties with vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation, and background knowledge. It is hoped that this research can be helpful students at Tay Do University to realize their common difficulties in the process of improving and developing their speaking skills.

Keyword: *speaking, difficulties, freshmen, university*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Nowadays, when the process of international integration is growing, English is more and more important and meaningful in everyone’s life. English has become the main language and a useful tool in communication between countries with different languages in the world. English is not only used in the field of study, scientific, and work research but also in the field of business, tourism, entertainment and etc. Therefore, learning English becomes invaluable and equally important to the modernization and industrialization of our country. Learning English plays a much more important role in international interaction than ever before. The Vietnamese education system has made English a subject, realizing the importance of the language. From the primary school to university years, students will learn four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), of which speaking is the most important. It is also a very vital skill when communicating in daily life. Brown and Yuke (1983) said that “Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in the real-life situations”. Moreover, Fluent English speaking is essential for communicating with foreigners and provides an excellent opportunity for success in career, study, culture, and daily life. Language is also a bridge connecting the community and social relationships. In addition, speaking English fluently when traveling makes it easy to make friends with foreigners and share valuable information. Moreover, it not only helps us to gain a lot of knowledge but also to become confident people and develop listening skills. Another advantage of speaking English is the ability to use it for job opportunities. English-proficient students will have better chances of getting a job. According to Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren (2006: 321), “*Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face*”. In general, the knowledge that students gain is mainly based on theory and a focus on grammar. As a result, English-majoring freshmen at Tay Do University encounter many difficulties in their speaking skills, such as a lack of vocabulary foundation, incorrect pronunciation, mistakes in grammar structure, and background knowledge. As previously stated, the purpose of this research was to investigate thoroughly the causes of typical problems in English-speaking classes and to devise some recommendations to assist English-majored freshmen in improving their speaking skills. As a result, this study on “*Common difficulties in English speaking of English-majored freshman at Tay Do University*” is expected to provide an overview of common obstacles or difficulties in speaking of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University, as well as assist them in overcoming their own obstacles.

1.2 The significance of study

The study is being conducted to assist freshmen majoring in English in recognizing faults in English speaking. Students can learn about their mistakes and find appropriate remedies to improve their English speaking skills as a consequence of the research findings.

1.3 The organization of study

This thesis is divided into five main chapters:

Chapter 1: *Introduction* provides the rationale, research aims, and research questions. Besides, the significance and organization of the research are also listed here.

Chapter 2: *Literature review* includes a definition of pronunciation and their importance, difficulties of pronunciation and previous studies.

Chapter 3: *Research methodology* which indicates the study's method employed in this thesis including such features as research aim, research question, and research hypothesis of the research to figure out difficulties in pronunciation.

Chapter 4: *Results and Discussion* part report the findings of the research to figure out difficulties in pronunciation in speaking

Chapter 5: *Conclusion, Limitations, Implications and Recommendation*. This chapter indicates the conclusion, implication, reflect on the limitations of the study, and put forward recommendations or suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of speaking

There are a lot of definitions of the word "speaking" that have been suggested by researchers in language learning. The definitions of speaking have been debated by many researchers with different perspectives. The following definitions are selected because they are typical and meaningful in content.

While Quianthy (1990) defines "*Speaking is the process of transmitting ideas and information orally in a variety of situations*". According to Hornby (1995) says that "Speaking is making use of words in an ordinary voice, offering words, knowing and being able to use a language to express oneself in words, and making a speech". From a different point of view, Chaney AL & Burd TL (1998) emphasizes "*Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts*". Chaney in Leong and Ahmadi (2017) also shared the same idea "*Speaking is known as making and sharing meaning process using a verbal and non-verbal symbol with different context*". These definitions have similar contents because it is a combination of verbal and body language.

In another way, Nunan, D. (2003) found out that "*Speaking is the use of language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency*". According to Harmer, J. (2007) said that "*Speaking is the ability to speak fluently and presupposes not only knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language 'on the spot'*". The researcher concludes that speaking is the ability to produce language and share ideas. Responding quickly while speaking can make a conversation lively. Therefore, speaking plays a key role in communication and is also a tool to impart information to audiences.

Besides, Tarigan (1990) also shared "*Speaking the capability in pronouncing sound or word to express or convey thought, idea, feeling, opinion and wish*". And Ismiati (2012) suggested that "*Speaking skill is the skill to perform the linguistics knowledge in an actual communication. Thus, by speaking with others we are able to know what kinds of situation are in the world*". To summarize, speaking is the ability to communicate, express emotions and think verbally through the use of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures.

Last but not least, Zhang (2009) asserted that "*Speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English*". To be honest, not only does the author feel that speaking English is difficult but I also think so, which is why I conducted this research.

In summary, it is concluded that speaking is the ability to create a language and share ideas. In a word, speaking English is the ability to appropriately convey verbal information. It not only clearly expresses words in front of others, but also expresses ideals, feelings and thoughts.

2.2 The importance of English Speaking

Nowadays, English is regarded as a powerful tool for assisting people in discovering, exploiting, and connecting things. Speaking English is viewed as the key to unlocking a great world for us because of the following effects: With the globalization of the world and the infiltration of international enterprises into the Vietnamese market, the relevance of English has grown even more apparent. If the students can communicate in English, it will be much easier for them to arrange to work with foreign partners in international fields and grow in their professions. Furthermore, for those who have not previously worked, English will demonstrate a significant portion of their skill and intelligence, allowing them to easily obtain a decent job with a very high income.

According to Brown, G & Yule, G (1983) say, "*Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations*". Furthermore, Ur, P. (2000) discovered that of the four language abilities

known as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking is the most significant and essential for efficient communication. Speaking is one of the most important skills to cultivate and improve in order to communicate effectively. One of the most difficult components of language learning is speaking ability. For students learning language, speaking skills are very important for their survival and growth in academic and professional life. In fact, every academic, professional, or business work requires effective speaking skills. Besides, speaking is considered to be the mostly sought skill for an individual to be accepted competent in a foreign language. Speaking is more than to form grammatically correct sentences; it rather covers broad areas of mechanics, functions, pragmatics and social interaction. Furthermore, speaking is one of the work criteria in today's world. It helps students achieve good jobs in the future because they may be expected to give presentations or sign contracts. If you are good at public speaking, you will have more opportunities in the future. Therefore, speaking skills are very important for students.

In short, the value of speaking English is mirrored in social relationships. If a person has good English speaking abilities, they will not feel ashamed while conversing with foreigners; instead of being reserved and hesitant, they will be able to speak boldly and coherently. It allows us to boost our self-worth in the eyes of our overseas pals. The interesting thing is that almost everyone wishes to be good at public speaking. However, it is a difficult skill to acquire and requires a significant amount of practice.

2.3 Common difficulties in English speaking

Obviously, everybody learning a new language makes blunders. Even if the students are dissatisfied, we must accept this as a fact of life. It is difficult to be a great learner in four core skills, notably speaking skills, when studying English as a foreign language. Kavin Hetrakul (1995) said that *"they use English more frequently only inside the class and less frequently outside the class. Whereas students have limited time to learn English in class, and they still do not have enough encouragement to practice English outside the class in order to get familiar with English"*. As I previously stated, English majors freshmen at Tay Do University have already faced some mistakes. Through this study, the researcher would like to discuss some specific issues that most students face through their ability to communicate.

2.3.1 Pronunciation

Proper English word pronunciation is essential for improving your English-speaking abilities. According to Wikipedia, *"Pronunciation is the way in which a word or a language is spoken"*. This may refer to widely agreed-upon sound sequences used in pronouncing a certain word or language in a specific dialect "correct pronunciation" or just the way a specific individual speaks a word or language. William Strunk, Jr (1935) said that *"If you don't know how to pronounce a word, say it loud!"*. Pronunciation gives students lots of trouble in speaking English in class, many students feel that standardized English pronunciation is the most difficult skill in speaking because pronunciation is more complicated than listening. This definitely challenges English majored freshmen students when learning to speak. Here are several common difficulties in English pronunciation:

2.3.1.1 Final sound and Initial sounds

Students frequently neglect to pronounce the final sounds when speaking English. This is quite easy to understand because Vietnamese has no final sounds. Final sounds are very important factors while speaking English. The fact is that half of English majored students forget to pronounce ending sounds or do not know how to speak ending sounds correctly. There are a lot of words that have nearly the same sound, the final consonant is a key to recognizing exactly the words that others are talking about. For example, two words "fine" and "find", of them have nearly the same phonetic transcription: /fam/ and /faɪnd/. If the speakers do not pronounce the final sound /d/ in the word "find", then the word "find" will be changed into "fine". A little error in pronunciation of the final sounds can also cause the listeners to misinterpret the speaker's meaning.

Furthermore, most students frequently cannot correctly pronounce the ending sounds in the plural form of words: /s/, /z/, /ɪz/, and in the past form of normal verbs: /z/, /d/, /ɪd/ since they all forget the rule of ending sound pronunciation. Almost all English majored students are unsure whether pronouns /s/ or /z/ should be used in cases when adding "-s" or "-es" at the end of the word or confuses /-d/ and /-ed/ in past verbs.

Many students /s/ and /ʃ/ are confused with each other, but we especially frequently use /s/ instead of /ʃ/ (when it is the initial sound), such as: "short" becomes "sort", and sometimes students wish to pronounce "Pan" but it turns into "Ban". It took about a week to get the pronunciation right. If the students pay attention, they will note that this pronunciation problem is widespread among folks in the South. Vietnamese does not make any distinction between voiced and unvoiced sounds. Therefore, many Vietnamese students have difficulties in wanting to pronounce English correctly as native speakers because of their previous habits of pronunciation. That is what makes pronunciation in the English language so challenging that they carry their first language speech habits with them.

2.3.1.2 Word stress

One of the supra-segmental aspects of spoken texts is word stress (Ladefoged, 1993; Nunan, 1999). *"Every word in English with more than one syllable has a prominent emphasis"*, according to Ladefoged (1993) and Kreidler (1997). An English word's stress pattern is fixed. The stressed syllable is frequently more energetic

and louder than the unstressed syllable (Ladefoged, 1993; Field, 2004). According to Underhill (1994), *some long polysyllabic words can have another syllable that is stressed in addition to the primary stressed syllable*. This is referred to as a secondary stressed syllable. The force is applied to the primary stressed syllable rather than the secondary stressed syllable. The primary stressed syllable is given more force than the secondary stressed syllable. For example, the primary stressed syllable of the word “information” is on the second-to-last syllable, whereas the secondary stress is on the first syllable. Both the primary and secondary stressed syllables of the word “information” contrast with unstressed syllables.

According to Ngo, N.B (2001:7), *“Vietnamese is a tonal language in which changes in pitch level and/or contour signal changes in meaning.”* He further stated, *“Vietnamese is a syllable-timed language, whereas English is a stress-timed language”*. As a result, Vietnamese learners struggle with the timing of stressed words. They frequently speak English without emphasizing any syllables or emphasizing the incorrect location. They almost all say the same thing at the same volume. Meanwhile, word stress in English is extremely varied. It can appear in any syllable in the word, including the first, second, third, and even fourth. Each stressed location conveys a distinct meaning.

In short, Word stress misplacement is one possible cause of the difficulties. To be able to communicate effectively and intelligibly in oral English, non-native speakers of English need to be able to produce understandable sounds. Word stress is an important element in English that students should remember. Using word stress helps students feel more confident and improve their speaking skills.

2.3.2.3. Intonation

There are numerous definitions of intonation, but the most basic is *“the sound changes produced by the rise and fall of the voice when speaking”* (Cambridge, 2017). Tench, P. (1996) defines intonation as the rise and fall of the pitch of the voice in spoken language. Camille (2018) claims that *“if you didn’t raise or lower your voice at certain parts of each sentence, you’d sound like a robot!”* However, intonation does not exist in isolation; it only makes sense when combined with three other factors: grammar, attitude, and discourse. In reality, intonation serves as a support for these aspects. The message that the speaker wishes to express will become more clear with intonation, especially when it comes to drawing listeners. Native speakers always use intonation to be able to easily guess the other’s feelings. Intonation is also a testament to English proficiency for English learners, the more intonation they use, the more natural their voice become.

According to Le (1999), *“the curriculum in their native language from kindergarten to high school did not have any exact standard for Vietnamese intonation, so Vietnamese people usually do not know what intonation is exactly, and some people even believe that the Vietnamese language does not have intonation”*. That is why Vietnamese students begin to concentrate on developing their speaking skills; they are constantly perplexed about employing intonation when speaking English; students frequently speak English with a monotonous accent and do not emphasize the words. Some of them also struggle with intonation, raising their voice in the wrong part of the sentence, particularly in wh- and tag questions. Those difficulties actually cause a lot of misunderstandings situations in reality.

In summary, intonation is an important aspect of speaking English. Students who want their voices to seem natural and keep listeners focused on the topic they speak about should pay attention to this aspect in order to improve. The pronunciation can be summarized as follows: The importance of pronunciation in English speaking skills cannot be overlooked. Mispronouncing or stressing incorrectly can cause the listener to misinterpret the speaker's problem or make the listener not understand the content. The reason is that they apply the Vietnamese pronunciation rules and are influenced by Vietnamese stress, so they stress each syllable as English is called the language rhythmic stress is measured by the rhythm between syllables. However, English readers often replace a consonant from their native language without moving their mouth in the correct shape to pronounce sounds in English. Lack of intonation in pronunciation and not correcting mistakes in pronunciation will be a major obstacles to learning English speaking of first-year English majored students at Tay Do University.

2.3.2 Grammar

Grammar is another significant part of linguistics that affects a student’s capacity to communicate. That is, grammar provides learners with the knowledge of syntax and semantics helping students to form a correct sentence using in conversation. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines grammar as *“the study of the classes of words, their inflections, and their functions and relations in the sentence.”* In addition, grammar gives learners the opportunity to manipulate the structure and differentiate the appropriate grammatical forms that suit their context.

According to Richards, J.C. (2008) states that *“our knowledge of grammar helps us find the appropriate chunks, and the speaker also assists us in this process through intonation and pausing.”* As a result, grammatical rules are said to be one of the fundamental aspects of speaking skills. Nevertheless, it is not simple to apply correct grammatical structures in English speaking. English learners find it difficult to remember all grammatical rules because of their diversity and complexity. Thus, students often worry about using the wrong

structures when speaking English. In conversation, if mistakes are made in one's grammar or word spelling, it will lead to misunderstanding and boredom for others, and even damage their relationship.

Moreover, Fredrickson (1997) claimed that the issue is that students become confused when they see a variety of verb forms and correlate them with time. They believe that verb tenses are always related to specific times. Many kinds of verb tenses are not always tied to time, as learners understand. The present simple does not necessarily refer to the past, and the present continuous does not always refer to the progressive action. Finally, understanding the language enables us to understand the meaning of single words or sentences, as well as the rules of grammar and how to apply them correctly.

Furthermore, students are perplexed about how to employ the correct tense in the passive voice. Tense is an essential component of passive voice structure. Vietnamese passive voice structures do not rely on tenses in the same way that English does, and students do not have the habit of paying attention to tenses. Students are frequently perplexed when it comes to altering verb forms while employing the passive voice structure. They can't transform a verb into its past participle right away, thus their interactions aren't consecutive. Therefore, remembering the proper tenses can assist students in completing meaningful passive sentences.

Additionally, students face difficulties while creating sentences since they frequently create incoherent sentences due to incorrect word arrangement. *"When students study a foreign language, they frequently make grammatical difficulties because they apply the structure of their mother tongue or first language to the structure of the foreign language, which differs from their native language"* (Haryanto, 2007). Grammar plays an evident part in communicating. Knowing how to develop and apply specific structures will enable learners to successfully communicate typical sorts of meaning. As a result, in order to become proficient, those students must accurately understand English language structures.

In conclusion, knowledge of the language enables us to know the meaning of isolated words or sentences or the rules of grammar. Linguists define language as speech, so knowing a language entails knowing its grammatical patterns as well as proper usage. Poor grammar will cause discomfort and bring bad emotions to the opposite person.

2.3.3 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined as all words that exist in a specific language or subject; mastering vocabulary is one of the most important abilities required for speaking; a rich vocabulary in all areas of communication - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Richard Lederer (1938) claimed that *"The English language is the most universal language in history, way more than the Latin of Julius Caesar. It's the most wonderful language because its vocabulary has a certain critical mass that makes a lingo good for punning."* For these reasons, vocabulary is crucial to a learner's success. Without an adequate vocabulary, speakers cannot communicate successfully or express their ideas in both oral and written formats.

According to Wilkin in Thorbury (2004), *"Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed"*. Furthermore, the goal of learning vocabulary should entail both remembering words and being able to apply them effortlessly in a variety of language contexts when the need arises. Many students struggle to communicate in English due to a lack of vocabulary and sentence structure. Vocabulary is divided into many different categories of words, such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, and so on, making it difficult for students to remember them all. In English, a word can have multiple meanings depending on the context; this causes students to be perplexed when it comes to picking words to speak in line with the context.

Although many students begin learning English in primary school and progress to college or university, their vocabulary remains limited. Students are taught basic English at university, but while speaking in public, native speakers employ slang, idioms, and phrasal verbs. In fact, first-year English majors still have several communication problems when speaking English with simple terms. Another source of difficulties in English-speaking classes is a lack of vocabulary, which makes speaking uninteresting and inefficient.

According to Schewertly (2012), *"Choosing appropriate vocabulary is an important aspect of any presentation. Lacking knowledge of vocabulary will become a challenge to choose the correct words. If the words used be not in rules, they will make a misunderstanding to the audiences"*. Following this statement, another typical error noted is that students frequently utilize inappropriate vocabulary in the situation. In fact, according to Jamie (2015), *"There will be numerous embarrassing moments, along with despair at your lack of vocabulary"*. As a result, many students are unable to easily convey their views due to a lack of vocabulary.

In summary, the English majored freshman has a lot of trouble speaking English with simple terms. Another reason why speaking becomes difficult and inefficient is a lack of vocabulary. Vocabulary seems to be the main reason why students feel uncomfortable expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings when speaking English.

2.3.4 Background knowledge

Background knowledge is also a challenge for English majors as they develop and improve their speaking skills. In fact, it appears that mastering language components such as vocabulary and grammatical structures is insufficient. What distinguishes speaking from other skills is that the speaker must have quick access to all relevant knowledge required to produce the appropriate language in relatively short time lags,

whereas learners in other skills normally have enough time to match the input with the existing knowledge. According to Turner, Husman, and Schallert (2002), *“a person’s background knowledge, also known as prior knowledge, is a collection of abstracted residue formed from all of life’s experiences”*. Besides, Simon (1996) defined that *“background knowledge is all knowledge learners have when entered a learning environment that is potentially relevant knowledge”*. Gebhard, J. (2000) also affirmed that *“background knowledge related to our real-world experiences and expectations that we have. This knowledge is very important when we consider the language process problem of students”*. Background knowledge is essential for students to efficiently communicate in English. Students frequently struggle to talk because they lack background information. They lack sufficient knowledge to deliver messages to listeners, and the concepts will be disrupted. Perhaps they rarely discover diversified fields; they simply focus on their main majors; for example, English majors only find knowledge about English but not history or science. As a result, background knowledge is the knowledge that students have earned throughout their studies and life.

Lacking background knowledge is one of the most important factors affecting fluency in speaking English. It is true that determining an exact definition of “knowledge” is difficult. Because knowledge is an abstract concept, it has a wide range of explanations and definitions, including those from philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Background knowledge is defined as *“what someone already knows about a subject that will assist him in learning new information”*. One of the issues that students have encountered is a lack of background knowledge. To speak English fluently, students must gain information in a variety of subjects since background knowledge allows them to generate adequate ideas to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Hence, students must acquire a wide range of knowledge in a variety of subjects in order to apply their knowledge in a speaking situation. However, when confronted with speaking circumstances that include these issues, students appear to lack the understanding to communicate their opinions or misunderstand what others say since these topics include many words and phrases that are unfamiliar to them. In brief, background knowledge is required for students to form concepts and develop ideas. Due to that reason, students in both urban and rural places must broaden their knowledge through the Internet or book

2.4 Related studies

In the past, many domestic and foreign researchers have conducted a number of related studies on the problem of common difficulties when speaking English as well as difficulties hindering students majoring in English when learning to speak. However, the topics are not the same and the participants can be of different levels and ages. The following related studies may provide supporting evidence for this study.

The first one that should be mentioned in the study *“Common Difficulties in Speaking of English-majored Sophomores at Tay Do University”* was conducted to explore their common difficulties from English classes 14A, 14B, and 14C at Tay Do University. The questionnaire and interview were the study's tools. According to the findings of the study, English-majored sophomores committed certain typical mistakes in pronunciation (final sounds, word stress, intonation), vocabulary (word order, word choice, lack of vocabulary), and grammar (wrong tense, inappropriate passive voice, wrong part of speech).

Secondly, Pradya Afisa, Sheila Yolanda (2015) *“The students’ difficulties in speaking at the tenth grade of SMA Negeri 1 Sine in 2014/2015 academic year”*. The subject of this research is the English teacher and the tenth-grade students. The tools for collecting data were class observation, recording, and interviews. The data are taken from the subject of the research in the form of the teaching-learning process, interview, and recording. The purpose of this study was to describe the students’ difficulties in speaking English at SMA Negeri 1 Sine.

Thirdly, Khong My Huong (2018) also performed a thesis about *“How to help first-year English majors at Hai Phong University avoid common mistakes in speaking lessons”*. The participants were 48 freshmen from 3 English-majored classes at Hai Phong Private University. They are freshmen; which means that their chances of learning English are not as many as those of students in their second or third years. The investigator applied quantitative techniques of data to analyze the result of the questionnaire. After that, she summarized all the results in table and chart form. Each chart and each table shows the number of students who chose the suitable answer in each questionnaire. The purpose of this study is to recognize features and characteristics of speaking skills, some of the difficulties, and students’ difficulties when learning speaking skills. All in all, this graduation paper is conducted to investigate the learning situation at Hai Phong Private University in Language Department and to find out students’ difficulties as well as common mistakes, particularly in terms of speaking skills. Then could be suggested approaches and techniques to solve the student's problems and inspire them to talk.

Next, Nguyen Thi Tra My (2019) carried out *“A Study on Common Pronunciation Mistakes of The Third Year English Majored Students at Hai Phong Private University and Some Suggested Solutions”*. The research tools included using questionnaires, conducting interviews to observe directly, and taking video clips. The objects were the third-year English majored students at Hai Phong Private University. The aim of the study was to help English learners, the third year English majored-students at Haiphong Private University realize some common difficulties when they speak English including some difficult consonants, ending sounds,

intonation, and stress difficulties, and to give them some ideas on how to cope with this problem. The result of this study answered some common pronunciation mistakes that third-year English majored students at Haiphong Private University have to solve. The researcher paid much attention to four issues including some difficult consonants, ending sounds, intonation, and stress difficulties, and hopes that this study will be useful and hopeful for every student who wants to speak English well.

Then, Huynh Thi Anh Tram conducted the research “*Problems of learning speaking skills encountered by English majored students at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University*” in 2020. The study sought to identify and analyze the difficulties encountered by English majored students at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University in developing speaking skills. The main research approach used in this study was a descriptive-analytic method to investigate the problem of learning to speak among English majored students. The findings demonstrated that the most common problems encountered by these students were related to both language and non-linguistic issues.

Finally, PhanThi Dieu (2023) with the study “*Common difficulties in speaking of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University, Vietnam*”. Accordingly, the participants of this research are English-majored freshmen coming from course 15 at Tay Do University. The questionnaire and the interview are the two main research instruments that are used to collect information. The findings could point out some difficulties in speaking experienced by English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University.

In summary, the research above discovered some common faults and difficulties students encountered when speaking English. As a result, the researcher used the data to conduct this study on faults in learning English speaking.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Aims – Research Questions – Hypothesis

3.1.1 Research aims

This research is to investigate some common difficulties in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University.

3.1.2 Research questions

This research is required to answer the following research questions:

- *Do English majored freshmen at Tay Do University have any difficulties in English speaking?*
- *What are some common difficulties in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University?*

3.1.3 Hypothesis

According to the first-year students majoring in English at Tay Do University, speaking is one of the challenging abilities in learning English. Therefore, based on relevant research questions and interviews, it is hypothesized that the first-year students majoring in English at Tay Do University have difficulties learning speaking English relating to pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and background pieces of knowledge.

3.2 Research Design, Participants, Instruments, Data Analysis

3.2.1 Design

The purpose of the study is to look at some of the most prevalent mistakes made by English majored freshmen at Tay Do University when speaking English and to assist them recognize their flaws so that they can improve. The instrument is the foundation for both quantitative and qualitative instruments of research results. To fulfill the aforementioned goals, freshmen majoring in English are chosen as survey samples. The participants are 55 English-majored freshmen who will be given questionnaires. In addition, to increase the reliability of the research, some students are chosen at random to answer the interview questions. The data of the participants will be compiled using a short list of questionnaire students, and the student interviews will be conducted in English. The data obtained on the instrument will be evaluated to reveal faults in learning English speaking skills.

3.2.2 Participants

The participants in this study will be 55 English-majored freshmen in the 2 classes of English 17A and 17B at Tay Do University. Generally, the participants are between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. They come from different areas, both rural and urban. Moreover, Vietnamese is their mother tongue and English is their foreign language. However, their histories are relatively similar because, due to the effect of the speaking skills curriculum in high school in the past, they did not have many opportunities to practice it. For this reason, when entering Tay Do University, their levels of speaking competence are restricted, and they experience many difficulties in both speaking and learning English. They will be given a questionnaire and a brief interview to answer some basic questions concerning English speaking skills in order to learn about the difficulties and difficulties they have encountered.

3.2.3 Instruments

Questionnaire and interview are used to collect the participants’ ideas about some common difficulties in speaking English.

3.2.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 4 questions and 12 statements and it is classified into the following group.

Group	Summary of the content of question group
From 1 to 4	Students' personal background
From 5 to 7	Pronunciation difficulties
From 8 to 10	Grammar difficulties
From 11 to 13	Vocabulary difficulties
From 14 to 16	Background knowledge difficulties

There are five questions in Group A that probe the students' English-speaking abilities. Students must select the response that best represents their points of view.

All other groups, which contain 12 statements about students' speaking faults, are designed using a five-degree scale that includes strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and highly agree (5). In this part, students are required to circle the number next to each statement provided in the answer sheets to indicate their level of difficulty in speaking.

3.2.3.2 Interview

The interview is intended to elicit specific and additional information from the freshmen as well as to assist them in recognizing their limitations in English speaking skills. It consists of four questions that focus on two key issues. The first is to identify their mistakes in speaking English skills based on the four specified criteria. It seeks to identify the most common challenges to the learning process of freshmen. The final step is to identify the additional hurdles in each of the faults. Because the detailed problems of each one could risk extremely serious consequences to their learning process. In a word, the purpose of this instrument is to detect, grasp, and figure out all of the mistakes made by freshmen majoring in English speaking skills; if they can recognize all of them in time, they will be able to save a lot of problems.

3.3 Data analysis

Following data collection, the data from the questionnaire will be analyzed by using Google Forms software and Excel. Most often, data from interviews, and other sources are understood using the qualitative analysis method. It will be estimated and aggregated how much information was collected together.

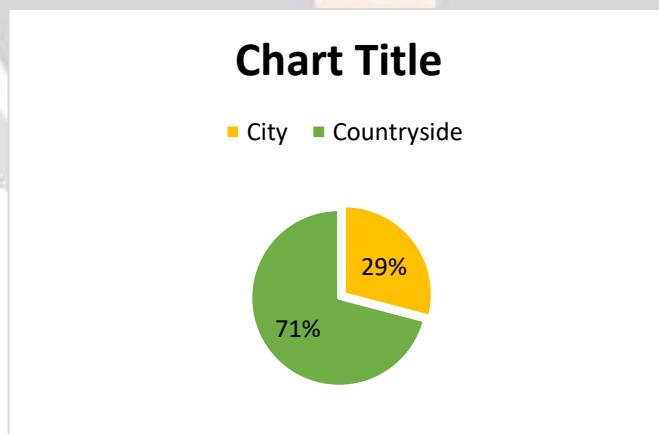
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results of the questionnaire

After collecting all the necessary information and ideas from 55 English-majored freshmen via the questionnaire and interview, the data were analyzed. The results included statistical evidence on some common difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and background knowledge.

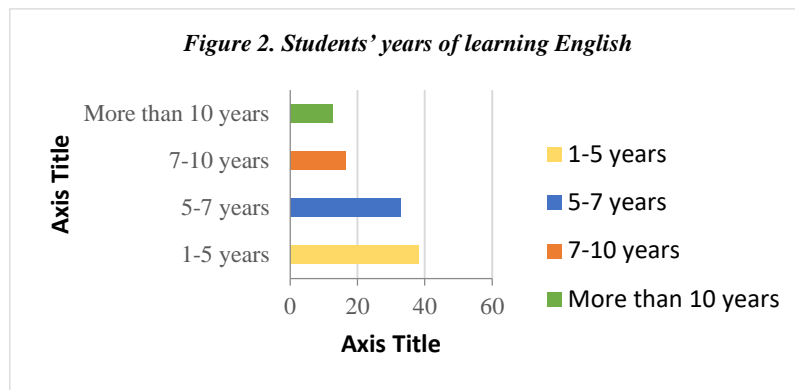
4.1.1 Students' background and common difficulties in speaking English

Figure 1. Students' living environment



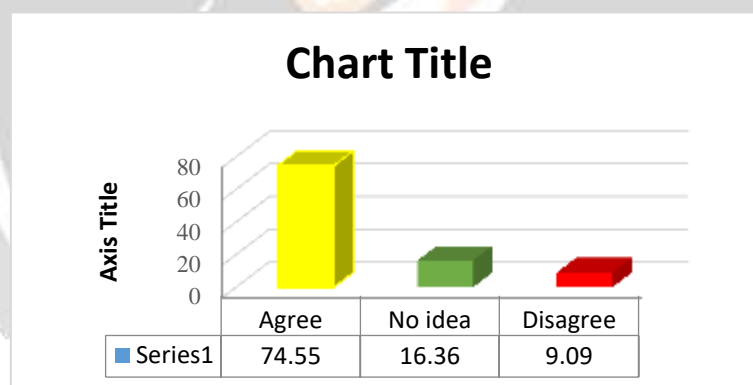
Random data revealed that 29.09% (16/55) of the participants in Tay Do University's course 17 for freshmen with English majors claimed to be from the city. In addition, 39 out of the remaining 55 students (70.91%, or 39/55) were from the rural area. They originated from many places, including the city and the rural, and each has its own teaching methodology, manual, and style. That was the explanation for why they hadn't discovered any efficient learning techniques for speaking English. Particularly for those who have selected English as their major, students' living situations have had a substantial influence on their learning speaking processes. As a result, students need to pay more attention to their living environments.

Figure 2: Students' years of learning English



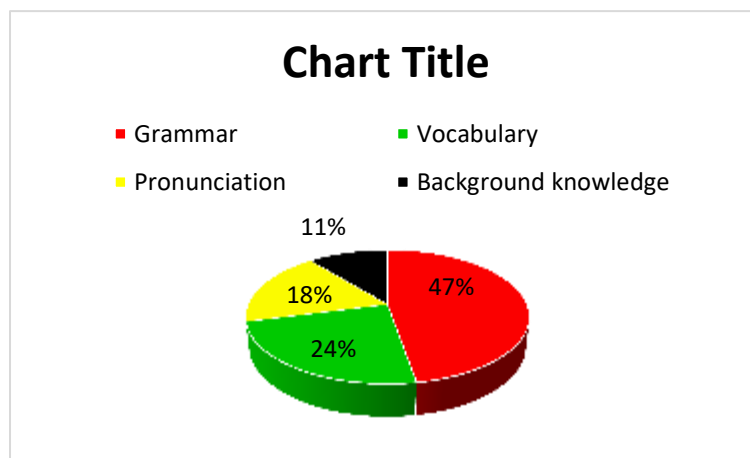
The graph indicated that 38.18% of the students had studied English for between one and five years, and 32.73% had only learned it for between five and seven years. It follows that the majority of students don't speak English well when they enrol at Tay Do University, making the decision to major in English a significant obstacle. They fall behind their classmates in class in terms of learning speed. On the other hand, 16.36% of English major students begin studying the language at age 7, indicating that they are capable of speaking English well if they are aware of their limitations. It will take a lot of time and work for the remaining students (12.73%) who have only recently begun learning English to stay up with the learning speed and advance their English-speaking abilities. Only 12.73% of participants in the pie chart had studied English for ten years or more. It implies that they have spent more than ten years studying this language before beginning college and have studied it since elementary or secondary school, but it does not imply that they have extensive expertise with English pronunciation. During those years, students studied a wide range of other courses in addition to English as part of their academic programme. Therefore, their English pronunciation for the present study was significantly impacted by the year they spent learning the language..

Figure 2. Students' rating for the importance of English speaking



The graph illustrates that most students always pay attention to the importance of speaking English, with an outstanding percentage of 74.55%. The findings show that roughly 75% of students have a favourable opinion of how important speaking English is. There was an increasing propensity to worry about the importance of speaking English. Only 9.09% of the English learners disagreed that speaking English was important. However, 16.36% of the population is left over, and they have no attitude towards English. Students cannot develop their speaking abilities if they do not understand how important speaking is while learning English. From a different perspective, speaking English is crucial for English learners' ability to communicate professionally and function at work. Today, the majority of jobs require excellent speaking abilities, so most companies place a high value on these abilities.

Figure 4. Students' rating for common difficulties in English speaking



In figure 4, there are four main common difficulties affecting English speaking: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and background knowledge. Among the four factors, grammar was the most significant issue with 47.27%, and vocabulary occupied the second position with 23.64%. Following those two difficulties above, pronunciation difficulties like intonation, accent, or stress were also the obstacles for students with 18.18%. The remaining problem was background knowledge, with 10.91%.

Generally speaking, grammar and vocabulary were the most prominent problems for students when speaking English.

4.1.2 Common difficulties in English speaking

PRONUNCIATION					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. You often get confused with /θ/ and /ð/ sounds because they can stand in many positions (beginning, middle, ending); sometimes, you forget to pronounce the final sound.	32.73%	61.82%	5.45%	0%	0%
6. Do you have any confusion when stressing main words in sentence even though you've known the rule of stress?	34.55%	54.55%	10.91%	0%	0%
7. Lack of intonation in pronunciation will be a major obstacles to learn speaking English.	76.36%	21.32%	1.82%	0%	0%

In statement number 5, nearly 95% of respondents were admitted that they usually get confused with /θ/ and /ð/ sounds because they can stand in many positions like beginning, middle, ending. There were no conflicts about ideas among the population as a whole. However, 5.45% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. The suffixes “ed” in the pronunciation of ED sometimes causes problems for non-native speakers, nearly 80% accepted that because it cannot be easily pronounced “ed” in three different ways: as /id /, as /t/ or as /d/. There were 14.55% of students did not think suffixes “ed” in pronunciation that troubled them. The majority of students with more than 83% admitted that they often forget to pronounce final sounds with words endings /s/, /z/, /t/, /d/, /k/. However, there were 10.91% of participants always remembered to pronounce final sound. Therefore, one of the most challenging tasks that learners must overcome from the start is correctly pronouncing English terminal consonants and consonant clusters.

Regarding statement number 6, Nearly 90% of freshmen agreed that they have confusion when stressing main words. It means students emphasized the importance of word stress by pointing that word stress is a phenomena that has been referred to be a key to English pronunciation. In contrast, a mere 10.91% of participants maintained a neutral stance, while none expressed disagreement or strong disagreement. When studying the English language, word stress is not an option; rather, it is a component of the language. Additionally, word stress aids comprehension even when a word has not been heard clearly by the listener. Most of respondents completely agreed that they have been learned many rules of stress, but they still do not know how to apply them well. The percentage of students choosing “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed” was 0%,

whereas 10.91% of them had no ideas. English speakers frequently tend to raise their voices during the main stress of the sentence and lower them at the end of the sentence for statements, requests, or questions that start with the question word. English has an extremely rich and broad range of sentence intonation. Even though the statement is the identical, we may change the tone of voice at the conclusion to tell the audience something different. With the question number 7, the majority of students (98.68%) completely agreed that lack of intonation in pronunciation will be a major obstacles for students to learn speaking English.

GRAMMAR					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. In my speaking, I frequently make grammatical difficulties such as 12 tenses, relative clause, singulars or plurals, subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement.	27.27%	67.27%	5%	0%	0%
9. Due to my habit, I usually speak English with wrong grammatical sentences.	32.73%	38.18%	27.27%	1.82%	0%
10. My speaking task is often full of grammatical mistakes and difficulties when teachers give comments on my tasks.	27.27%	63.64%	5.45%	3.64%	0%

According to the aforementioned findings, nearly 95 percentage of students (94.54%) assume that they commonly make grammatical difficulties such as 12 tenses, relative clauses, singulars or plurals, subject-verb agreement, and noun-adjective agreement in statement 8, but only 5% of respondents showed no idea about this statement. Besides, the students claimed in statement 9 that, due to their habits, they usually speak English with incorrect grammar, with 70.91% of participants (39/55) concurring. When getting comments from teachers on their speaking tasks, nearly 92% of participants considered that they often have challenges with grammatical mistakes and difficulties. However, there were 27.27% of students who did not have any thoughts about this statement. With excellency students, they disagreed with statement number 10; they didn't consider grammar to be their problems.

In short, grammar supports our communication when learning a foreign language like English. Therefore, knowing how it works helps students evaluate language's meaning and efficacy. It can improve accuracy, detect ambiguity, and use English's expressiveness. Grammar is considered the language's skeleton; hence, students must be proficient in grammar to speak fluently and successfully. Students regularly commit grammatical difficulties in their speaking, including sentence structure, tenses, relative clauses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and articles. To summarise, grammar is an essential aspect of teaching and learning. Students can focus on grammar constructs if English learners want to be good at speaking English.

VOCABULARY					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. I often use incorrect words to explain my ideas, so the listeners cannot convey my ideas.	32.73%	61.82%	5.45%	0%	0%
12. I rarely used slang, idioms, phrasal verbs, or collocations in my English speaking tasks because of lacking vocabulary	34.55%	54.55%	10.91%	0%	0%
13. While speaking, I cannot explain my ideas exactly with the listeners because I often choose appropriate vocabulary or wrong words	76.36%	21.82%	1.82%	0%	0%

As noted in the chart, 94.55% of the freshmen who majored in English agreed with statement 11 that they often use incorrect words to explain their ideas, so the listeners cannot convey their ideas. Along with that, their biggest problem was a lack of vocabulary; they rarely used slang, idioms, phrasal verbs, or collocations in their English-speaking tasks, with 89.10% of responses in statement number 12. Students found it difficult to communicate their ideas when effective and precise language is used to do so. In response to statement 13, 98.18% of the participants said they cannot explain their ideas exactly to the listeners when speaking because they often choose inappropriate vocabulary or the wrong words. No one denied the importance of insufficient vocabulary, which would be one of the biggest challenges while speaking English. In conclusion, Tay Do University freshmen who majored in English frequently encountered issues with word formation, meaning, and deficiency during the speaking process. Vocabulary is a fundamental feature of speaking since it helps English learners understand what you are trying to convey. Having a vast vocabulary, knowing its meaning, and understanding how to utilise it allows students to convey their thoughts rationally and clearly. Vocabulary also stands on its own as a meaningful component of language.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14. Background knowledge is essential when speaking English.	27.27%	52.73%	14.55%	5.45%	0%
15. Background knowledge allows you to instill enough ideas in others to allow them to convey their thoughts, feelings, and opinions while speaking.	34.55%	38.18%	21.82%	5.45%	0%
16. I do not grasp what the native speakers say because I do not have enough knowledge on their new subjects.	27.27%	54.55%	18.18%	0%	0%

In statement 14, freshmen students believe that background knowledge is an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition, with 80% of participants agreeing and 5.45% disagreeing, while the remainder of 14.55% had neutral ideas. As for statement 15, "*Background knowledge allows you to instill enough ideas in others to allow them to convey their thoughts, feelings, and opinions while speaking.*" 72.73% of participants agreed. Only 5.45% of respondents did not agree with the statement 14. Also, 84.82% of them agreed with statement 16: "*They do not grasp what the native speakers say because they do not have enough knowledge on their new subjects*". To summarise, grammar structures, vocabulary, pronunciation, and background knowledge are really the challenges for students while speaking English. To strengthen their speaking skills, they should practise them more and more in order to develop a deep love for speaking, and they should also broaden their experience in various fields of life.

4.2 Results of the interview

The interview for students consists of three questions:

In question 1, "*Do you think speaking is a difficult skill when learning English? Why and why not?*" 100% of the students (8/8) confirmed that they have difficulties speaking English because speaking English is probably one of the hardest skills to learn. It takes a lot of time and effort for English learners to pronounce well and use correct grammar with appropriate vocabulary.

In the next question, "*What difficulties do you often encounter when speaking English?*", 87.50% said that they had problems with grammar and vocabulary; 12.50% thought that they had difficulties with pronunciation or background knowledge.

In question number 3, "*What do you often do to improve your English speaking skills?*" Most students said that they also used some useful websites like English Podcasts, Youtube, Ted Talk, VOA news, and BBC news to improve their speaking and pronunciation skills.

To sum up, there are four main common difficulties affecting English speaking, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and background knowledge. Among the four factors, grammar and vocabulary were the most significant issues (87.5%). Following those two difficulties above, pronunciation and background knowledge only occupied 2.50%.

4.3 Discussion

The survey regarding the amount of time students spent learning English allows the researcher to assess the fundamentals of their abilities and knowledge during their speaking and pronunciation abilities. A few have completed 1 to 5 years of study. Some people have studied English for five to seven years or less. The remaining students have also been studying English for more than seven years. Although they believe their

speaking and pronunciation abilities are quite strong, they are unsure of how good their English is. They were good at speaking and listening, but pronunciation was really difficult for them. Since pronunciation is a difficult task to undertake, students frequently focus on speaking abilities instead of pronunciation. The research's findings indicated that there were three important factors to consider in English pronunciation: stress, voiced and voiceless sounds, final sounds, and mother tongue influence.

English is regarded as the language of this kind and is the most important medium for international communication. As a result, there is a pressing need for English communication among nations worldwide, and in Vietnam in particular, in order to draw in foreign investment. Vietnamese people cannot pronounce English correctly, despite the fact that it has become a necessity for education and employment possibilities. Vietnamese contains phonotactic features similar to those of other languages that prevent native learners from pronouncing English like native speakers. This area of the issue has received a lot of interest due to the lack of Vietnamese word-final sounds and the many difficulties most Vietnamese speakers have with English word-final consonants.

All things considered, English-majoring freshmen at Tay Do University faced many difficulties in speaking English. To improve their speaking and pronunciation skills, students must identify their challenges and devise effective solutions.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Speaking is a vitally critical mode of communication. If students want to speak English fluently, they must work hard to overcome some communication faults. Freshmen majoring in English at Tay Do University have also struggled with linguistic components (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and background knowledge). The purpose of this study is to highlight the difficulties in speaking English.

5.1 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an essential aspect of specialized students' English speaking skills and this is also a tough ability for them to master. During the learning process, students frequently make mistakes with pronunciation due to variations in the sound systems of the two languages (English and Vietnamese). In English, a single letter can indicate a variety of sounds. Furthermore, many words have silent letters that can appear at any point in the word. Three of the seven short English vowels are absent in Vietnamese, and there are no vowel contrasts (minimal pairs), implying that there is no distinction between short and long vowels. A letter in Vietnamese is frequently represented by the same phoneme. Some phonemes in English appear to be represented by identical letters but different pronunciations. Vietnamese is generally spoken in a staccato manner. Syllables and words are not tied together like they are in English, but are clearly separated. Final consonant clusters in English, in particular, cause the most difficulty for Vietnamese students, and this is a serious issue for Vietnamese students. When you speak a statement improperly, the listeners will not grasp what you are saying.

5.2 Grammar

English grammar is tough to remember, master, and apply logically. Grammatical norms are one of the most important parts of speaking skills. Maintaining proper grammar can be difficult, especially when you're conversing with someone who speaks at an extremely quick rate. Grammatical competence is an umbrella concept that encompasses gaining experience in grammar (morphology, syntax), vocabulary, and mechanics in speaking. In speaking, mechanics refers to basic sounds of letters and syllables, word pronunciation, intonation, and stress. It is also difficult to create understandable sentences in the absence of structures.

5.3 Vocabulary

Learning vocabulary is an essential component of learning a language. The more words you know, the better you will understand what you hear and read. A lack of vocabulary will cause students to be unable to understand the meaning of the words or to understand another meaning of the words in circumstances when the words have numerous meanings. The context and the dictionary can also help with special challenges in vocabulary understanding, such as polyyps, the word's idiomatic usage, false cognates, and the differentiation between homophones. Remembering vocabulary (Vocabulary learning has traditionally been viewed as a memory problem) appears to be another challenge for vocabulary learners. One of the most serious issues with vocabulary learning is that what is "learned" today is frequently forgotten the next day. They also cannot talk confidently when their vocabularies are insufficient to cover a wide range of topics while giving a speech, which risks making what we say uninteresting and unappealing.

5.4 Background knowledge

According to the study, students may struggle to understand certain topics if they do not have background knowledge in several fields. Students will be hampered in their ability to improve their knowledge or perform if they lack background information. Background information is diverse, including society, culture, health, and so on, making it difficult for presenters and listeners to understand and catch up. It also prevents students from expressing their views and feelings when speaking because they may have enough vocabulary to give a speech but have no knowledge about the issues. The difficulties that influences the development of background knowledge is our academically oriented experiential base the number of experiences that will

directly add to our knowledge of content we encounter in school. The more academically oriented experiences we have, the more opportunities we have to store those experiences as academic background knowledge.

After performing this research and analyzing the crucial information gathered from the freshmen, the researcher was able to identify several prevalent faults in the English speaking of Tay Do University's English majored freshmen. These were issues with pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and background knowledge. The study's findings also clearly reveal that students have trouble speaking. However, most students believe that English speaking ability is actually vital for studies and life, so this research will be beneficial to students. This article will assist students in recognizing problems and determining how to correct them.

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