

# CURRENT SITUATION OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILL OF STUDENTS OF THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Nguyen Vu Phong Van<sup>1</sup>, Le Huy Hoang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration)

<sup>2</sup>(Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration)

## Abstract

English has been one of the most important subjects, especially in studying at university level as well as in students' future working environment, and speaking skill is very important for students to communicate in various situations. However, this skill is not particularly focused on by a majority of students of Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration (TUEBA), Thai Nguyen University. To propose some solutions to this problem, this article will present the current situations of learning English speaking skill and suggest some necessary suggestions to improve the skill among students of TUEBA.

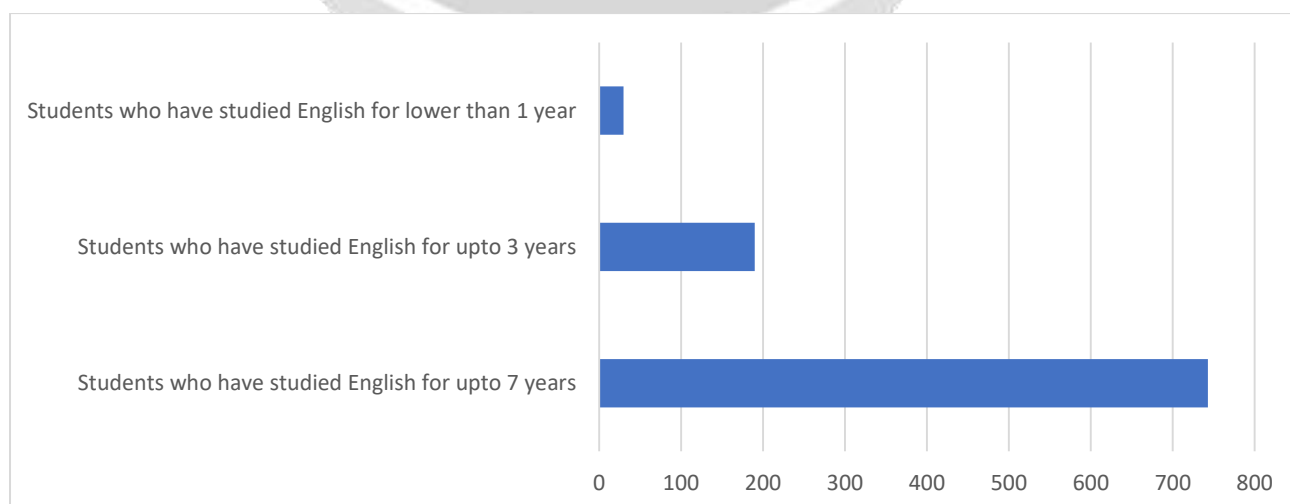
**Keywords:** English speaking, English speaking skill, Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration, TUEBA

## 1. Rationale

In the current international integration era, English has become a crucial communicative tool, it has helped the businesses operate internationally more efficiently and smoothly. A graduate applying for a position in a company with a high level of using English will make a good impression on the employers in comparison with others without this ability. However, there is a very urgent situation that a majority of students of TUEBA (a non-major English language university) cannot communicate well in English. It is very problematic because most of the students has been studying for a long time, before they enrolled in the university. To identify the main causes of this problem, there must be a study on large scale, however, within the scope of TUEBA, this article only mentions the current situation of teaching and learning English speaking skill.

## 2. Current English ability of TUEBA's students

Table 2.1: English language learning experience before entering TUEBA



TUEBA is one of the universities which has the most students of Thai Nguyen University. According to the surveyed of nearly 963 students of the university, 77.2 % of the students has studied English language for up to 7 years, 19.7% has studied for 3 years and only nearly 3.1% has just begun to study English when they enter the university. However, also in the survey, only approximately 15% of the students are confident in their speaking skill. The level of English language of the students is quiet low, the English language skills of the students are very limited, especially speaking skill. Most of the surveyed students cannot understand and hold a simple daily conversation. A large number of students (90%) don't use English outside school, a frequent answer is that they just study and use English when they have the exams or they are forced to speak English in the classrooms.

In English lessons in general, in English speaking lessons in particular, there are very few students actively participate in pair works, group works or presentation activities, only about 10% of the students regularly join in these activities when lecturers require them to do, the last students just join the activities passively and often require a lot of supports from lecturers and other students. Around 80% of the students cannot understand the instructions if given in English, and with the nearly the same number of students who cannot hold a simple sentence without a pronunciation error.

### 3. Factors affecting English language learning of students of non-major English language university

There are many factors which have influences on the language learning process, on the students' side, there are three main factors which are learning motivation, learning attitude and learning strategies.

#### 3.1. Learning motivation

Harner (1991) stated that students who have better motivation in learning will be more successful than those who don't. And Meilan, J. (2014) stated that motivation is considered as a key feature in the success of language learning and has great effect on the efficiency and productivity of English language teaching. If students have right motivations in learning, they will be well motivated to achieve the goals. Cole, P.G. and Chan, L.K.S. (1994) mentioned extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation consists of the cultures of the country, the need to use the language to achieve a person's goals such as having good studying results, applying for a job or promoting to a higher position in their job. To TUEBA's students, extrinsic motivation is that they try to study hard to graduate on time or get a good job in the future. With students who have such good motivation, they have joined some courses to get some English language certificates like IELTS, CEFR or TOEIC.

Table 3.1: Number of students who have and have not taken an English language test

<i>Students who have taken an English language test</i>	<i>Students who have an intention to take an English language test</i>	<i>Students who do not have an intention to take an English language test until they are required to</i>
72	367	524

As we can see from the above table, among nearly 1000 students, only about 7.5% of the students have ever taken an authentic English test, meanwhile more than half of the surveyed students don't have any desires to take an English test until they are pushed to do so; this means students lose an important motivation to learn English, they just go to English classes because these classes are compulsory, they are required to do such classes to complete their courses at the university.

Extrinsic motivation helps students focus on their aim of studying a language, meanwhile, intrinsic motivation consists of four main elements inside the classroom which are the first one is the classroom's physical conditions, teaching and learning facilities, the surrounding environment, and the size of the classroom; the second one is the teaching method, a decisive factor in a student's interest in the subject; the third one is character, knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers; the fourth one is the studying results of the students themselves.

However, according to the survey results, the majority of students (78%) do not have the right motivation to study. The cause of this problem related to the students' intrinsic motivation:

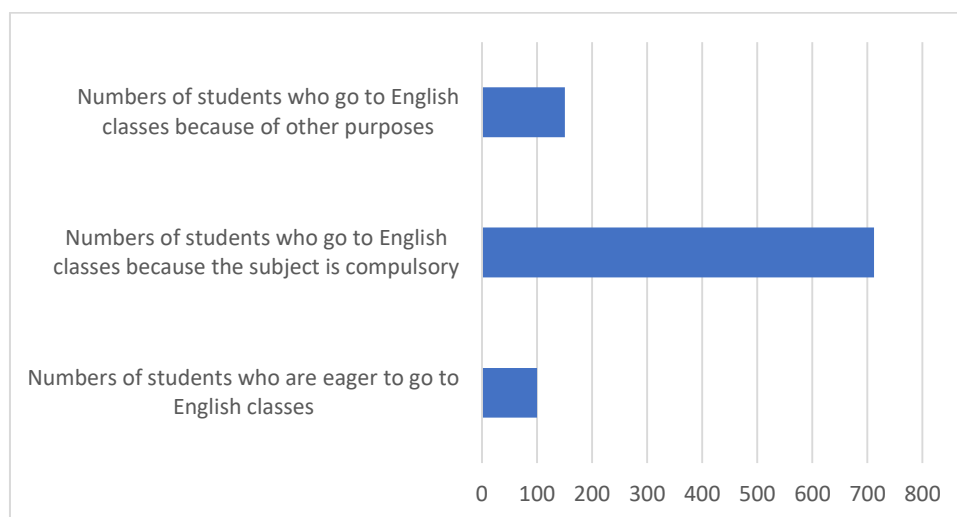
- The physical condition of the classroom is not very good: many classrooms suffer from hot sun (in the summer; noise resistance of the surrounding environment, etc.
- Teaching and learning facilities are still poor, not meeting the need for innovative teaching methods. English lecturers are mainly equipped with projectors and boards, which are of poor quality, laptops and speakers are mainly self-equipped, thus significantly affecting the quality of teaching.

- Class size is still big, there are usually 45-60 students in a class, which are not suitable for foreign language classes, which makes students less likely to practice skills.
- Teaching methods are still very traditional.

### 3.2. Learning attitude

Gardner and Lambert (1972) mentioned that favourable attitudes toward learning a language would facilitate such openness, whereas negative attitude would impede it. Learning attitude has a close relation to learning motivation. Students with good motivation will have good attitude toward what they learn.

Table 3.2: Reasons for which TUEBA's students attend English classes



At TUEBA, many students (74%) learn English with forced psychology; they don't feel comfortable to come to English classes to learn English. They learn English because it is a compulsory subject in the study program. Because there is no proper motivation to study, many students do not have the correct attitude in learning English. Sometimes many students do not prepare the lessons in advance, do not participate in communication activities in class; or find excuses to drop out of classes or go to class late. Meanwhile, only 10.1% of the students feel eager to join English classes. Almost the same number of students go to classes with other purposes (to be checked attendance, to meet other students just to name a few).

### 3.3. Learning strategies

According to Rebeca, L.O. (1990), language learning strategies are purposeful mental actions used by a learner to regulate his or her second or foreign language learning, it helps learners to take their learning easier, faster, more enjoyable and more effective.

A student who wants to achieve high results in learning not only has the right motivation and a positive learning attitude, but also must have the right learning strategy. Currently, many TUEBA's students still don't have the right learning strategies, for example, when they prepare the lessons in advanced, they just focus on looking for the meanings of the words they haven't known; when doing a given activity, they just translate the requirement into Vietnamese, prepare the solutions in Vietnamese and then translate them into English and present them. With such preparation and practice of communication activities, students have to spend a lot of time in class, in addition, this will lose the students' responsiveness and reaction, affecting the students' ability to think in English.

## 4. Suggestions

### 4.1. To teachers

- Determine the correct student learning motivations to build a study program that meets those motivations.
- Instruct and advise students on effective ways of learning to help students feel more interested in learning English (how to learn vocabulary, apply that vocabulary in situations, learn the correct pronunciation, etc.)
- Motivate and encourage students to self-study.
- Design different types of activities according to students' levels and are suitable for each group of students.

- Encourage students to limit their use of Vietnamese in class; limit writing during speaking practice hours.
- Focus on effective communication rather than speaking correct grammar and vocabulary.

#### **4.2. To students**

- Define for themselves a right motivation, learning attitude, appropriate learning strategy to improve the quality of learning.
- Adapt the strategies of learning English to suit requirements of learning and requirements from lectures.
- Actively participate in class activities; take advantage of class time to practice communicating with classmates, join in the given activities, especially speaking activities.
- Always looking for every opportunity to communicate with others in English.
- Create a habit of thinking in English, restrict the translations of ideas from Vietnamese to English.
- Practice pronunciation and fluency, which is very important to form students' confidence in speaking in front of the public.

#### **4.3. To the university**

- Provide more teaching and learning facilities to meet the requirements of teaching innovation.
- Implement small class sizes (30-35 students / class) so that students have more opportunities to practice communication.
- Implement level division so that students do not have psychological fear when speaking in public.
- Organize exchanges with representatives of businesses so that students have the opportunity to learn about the requirements of employers, thereby helping students navigate their study aims.

### **5. Conclusions**

Improve students' English-speaking skill is not easy at all. The difficulty is that it takes time to change a foreign language learning habit that has become outdated, and is no longer suitable in the new situation. Moreover, to master this skill also requires a sufficient amount of practice time, there must be close cooperation between teachers and students. It is even more important that students have correct motivations, attitudes, strategies of learning English speaking skill, which will make up their success in their study as well as provide them with a better tool to prepare for their future jobs.

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