

# STRATEGIES FOR FACE TO FACE ORAL COMMUNICATION OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

Nga H.T. NGUYEN, Tay Do University, Vietnam

Hang T.T. LE, Tay Do University, Vietnam

## ABSTRACT

*Nowadays, English is considered to be the most popular communication language. Good command of English is an important goal of English teaching. Language learners can significantly improve communicative competence by developing ability to use communication strategies or strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems. The current exploratively study focuses much on natural investigation which non-English majored students cope with face-to-face oral communication problems. The participants of this research are 120 non-English majored students majoring in Pharmacy, Accounting, Business Administration, Food Technology, and Information Technology at Tay Do University. A questionnaire and paper interview are used as an instrument to collect the data from the participants. This study is conducted with the aim of helping students improve their communication skills.*

**Key words:** *non-English majored students, communication skill, university*

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

Nowadays, society is more and more developing. Vietnam is in the process of integrating with other countries around the world. In general, together with Vietnam's joining the World Trade Organization in 2006 and the opening attitude towards foreign investors, the demand for employees who are good at communication in English is increasing. English is considered as a tool for communication among people in the world. Especially, communication in English is more and more important in life. Aladdin (2012) found that, "Communication strategies can be used to convey messages and therefore, can improve students' communication in the target language." English language students in general and English language students at Tay Do University in particular, often have difficulty in face-to-face communication. At Tay Do University, students' fluency in English communication skills is more and more important as the training aims as: "The ability to communicate confidently and fluently in multi-cultural communicative environment." However, many non-English students at Tay Do University still have problems in English communication after graduating from university. Especially non-English majored students at Tay Do university do not have many opportunities to practice speaking at high school because they learnt grammar a lot with the thought that grammar is the most important ingredient. That is the reason why students always feel worried, uncomfortable and unconfident when speaking English. Listening and speaking play an important role in better communication. Therefore, the study "Strategies for face to face oral communication of non-English major students at Tay do University" is carried out.

### 1.2 The significance of study

This research is designed in order to provide some coping strategies in students communicative skill. The finding of the research is expected to help students communicate face-to-face better.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

## **2.1 The definition of communication**

Communication is the act of conveying the information and message of an object, an individual or a group to another subject through the use of language, body language and communication rule that both parties understand. The term "communication" has long been discussed by many researchers. According to Lynch (1996), the word "communication" has its origin from the Latin verb *communicare* with the meaning "to share", "to make common". Merriam Webster dictionary defines communication as "a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior as communication." On the basis of information acquisition, the two parties will develop and adjust their goals and behaviors through mutual interaction to understand the same situation, have the same voice and get the most benefits. In addition, Tubbs (2003) defines, "Communication is the process in which meaning is created among two or more people." Communication is the activity of exchanging information. Communication achieve a certain purpose to establish awareness and interact with each other in the relationship between people and people.

## **2.2 The importance of communication**

Communication is a tool for exchanging and receiving information. Although there are still many existing problems, communication strategy is considered as a supportive method for better communication. Strategy comes from the ancient Greek term "strategia" used to refer to the tactics employed to defeat the enemy. In the field of education, strategy is a tool to cope when problems arise. Færch and Kasper (1983) define communication strategies as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal." Further, Canale (1983) sees communication strategies as "verbal and non-verbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more other areas of communicative competence, and to enhance the effectiveness of communication." Communication strategies are heavily used to achieve better results. In dialogue, communication strategies can bridge the language gap and knowledge between the talkers.

## **2.3 Difficulties in communication in English**

### **2.3.1 English sounds**

Vietnamese who learn English often make basic mistakes in swallowing sounds, having no stress, and speaking without intonation. They are also easily confused when they do not understand what they are saying. There are even some cases that are misleading due to Vietnamese pronunciation.

### **2.3.2 English translation**

Listening to English, translating into Vietnamese, moving backwards before speaking will take too much time. This is the main reason why sometimes students cannot keep up with the speaker's speed. It is difficult to express fluently and fluently in thoughts.

### **2.3.3 Vocabulary**

The key requirement for good communication is vocabulary. If students vocabulary is too low, they cannot hear and speak well. According to Rubin and Thompson (1994) "Vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language." Besides, it is supported by Ur (1996) that, "Vocabulary is one of the important thing to be taught in learning a foreign language because it will be impossible to speak up without a variety of words." Students often lack the necessary vocabulary when they are engaged in authentic communicative situations (Rabab'ah, 2003). In addition, vocabulary is very important when improving speaking skill. If speakers do not have vocabulary, they cannot speak anything and do not understand what people say.

### **2.3.4 Pronunciation**

Pronunciation skills are said to be difficult to learn due to the language barrier, Vietnamese inherent pronunciation different from English. However, this is also a good decision which is important for whether students are good at English conversations or not. A person who speaks well needs to pronounce the word clearly and knows how to use intonation in communication suitably. Celce Maurica (1996) also agrees that, "There is a close link between pronunciation and listening comprehension since the ability to perceive and produce speech requires the knowledge of the sound, intonation, stress pattern and how speech is organized." Sometimes students think that pronunciation is not as important as vocabulary, but if

people do not pronounce correctly, they will not understand what the speaker says. In addition, improving and developing pronunciation require a lot of time. Therefore, if students want to be good English speakers, they should practice pronunciation regularly.

## **2.4 Strategies for coping with face to face oral communication**

### **2.4.1 Confidence**

It is critical to reduce oral communication apprehension and promote students' confidence. Confidence in one's ability to communicate and it may also impact on participation within a group. Since the interest of learners is related to their confidence, their lack of confidence leads them towards "communication apprehension" In other words, students who lack motivation often experience communication apprehension. They prefer to remain silent in public or in front of native speakers rather than use their target language. Furthermore, a competent student may fail to be engaged in oral communication in the target language if he or she is lacking confidence. Therefore, lacking confidence may make him or her less competent.

### **2.4.2 Gestures**

Gestures are the unspoken element of communication that we use to reveal our true feelings and emotions. Gestures are good candidates for strategies; they are exploited to solve lexical problems, typically in conjunction with speech to solicit lexical help from the native interlocutor. Gestures are also used metacommunicatively to manage problematic interaction by flagging ongoing word search, floor keeping, and so forth. In addition, The facial expressions, the body pose, the gestures, the movements are in accordance with the oral sounds. They are in harmony and complete the task to express the emotions and ideas of the communicators. Non-verbal expressions seem to be understandable in terms of their meanings. Therefore, using gestures is likely to be significant for language learners when they encountered some sort of oral communication problems.

### **2.4.3 Speaking more slowly**

Speaking more slowly helps develop better content for listeners. Actually, rate of speaking refers to how fast or slow you speak. If you speak too fast, the listeners will not be able to absorb the information that the speaker wants to present. Speaking too slowly may make the listeners lose interest. The key is to vary your rate of speaking in a middle range, staying away from either extreme, in order to keep the listeners engaged. In general, a higher rate of speaking signals that a speaker is enthusiastic about his or her topic. Fast rate is one of the most common causes of unclear speech. Slowing the rate of your speech gives you time to form sounds accurately and gives your listeners time to absorb what you have said. Learning to breathe deeply while speaking is one of the most effective strategies for slowing down naturally.

To sum up, the ultimate goal of leaning a language is to communicate with each other. In fact, communication in general, especially in face-to-face oral communication plays a vital role in exchanging messages, information and so on. Therefore, the above strategies are useful for students, especially for non-English majored students to cope with problems in face-to-face oral communication.

## **3. RESEACH AIM, RESEACH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **3.1 Reseach aim**

The most important purpose of this study is to help non-English students at Tay Do University improve their face-to-face communication skills.

### **3.2 Reseach question**

The research is required to answer the following researched questions:

1. Do non-English majored students at Tay Do university have problems in communication in English?
2. What are common problems that non-English majored students encountere in oral communication?

### **3.3 Hypotheses**

According to the literature and the research questions, it is hypothesized that communication skills of non-English students at Tay Do University will improve and develop from the benefits of coping strategies in communication. Students can find out and solve their own problems to communicate English better. Language learners can significantly improve their communicative competence by developing their ability to use communication strategies or strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems. This study helps students improve their communication skills, makes them feel confident and communicate better.

#### **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

##### **4.1 Design**

The research is conducted to answer the research question and to test the hypotheses. It aims to find out the difficulty of communication of non-English language students at Tay Do university. In this study, A questionnaires and an interview paper are used as tools to find the answers of the research question. Besides, learners are selected randomly as the participants.

##### **4.2 Participants**

The participants of this research are 120 non-English majored students majoring in Pharmacy, Accounting, Business Administration, Food Technology, and Information Technology at Tay Do University. They come from different areas both rural and urban. They all speak Vietnamese as their first language and English is considered as their foreign language. The students are of equal level. Most of them have not had much chance to communicate with native speakers.

##### **4.3 Instruments**

The instrument used in this study is the questionnaire which is collected from students. The questionnaire is used as an instrument because it has more advantages. One of the benefits is that the information needs to be reliable. Besides, the questionnaire helps to get a lot of information about the participants.

The questionnaire includes 20 statement and is designed based on the research aims and research questions. In the questionnaire, the first part is about a brief description of some personal information of the participants. From question 1 to question 4, the participants circle their choice on the answers given, they can give the specific answer if needed. These questions are about a student's background. The next part is about the suggested factors that are useful for communicating English. The questions are composed in close form. Each statement includes a five-point scale from (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) no idea, (4) disagree and (5) strongly disagree. It focuses on problems in communication skills and strategies in communication.

The interview paper is designed to get specific information from non-English majored students about problems in communication skills and strategies in communication. It includes five questions. Fifteen students are randomly selected out of 120 students that take part in the survey. This instrument aims to confirm students' difficulties and strategies in communication.

#### **5. EXPECTED OUTCOME**

Communication skills are considered a relatively difficult skill in language learning. This study will look for communication difficulties non-English majored students. The important purpose of this study is to provide students with strategies in face-to-face communication. The communication strategies mentioned in this study are being confident, using gestures and speaking slowly. Besides, these strategies will help students improve their communication skills with native English speakers. Students can improve pronunciation, intonation, accent, confidence while communicating with native English speakers.

Firstly, confidence is the proficiency in language knowledge, experience, and application of foreign languages. In addition, confidence in English communication helps students express their attitude in life, in communicating with others and have the courage to speak English and practice communicating every day.

Secondly, gestures are the unspoken element of communication that we use to reveal our true feelings and emotions. Gestures help students better express what students want to say about both quantity and quality. Body language will help students convey emotions and ideas to listeners more easily.

Thirdly, speaking more slowly helps develop better content for listeners. Slowing the rate of speech gives students time to form sounds accurately and gives your listeners time to absorb what students have said. Learning to breathe deeply while speaking is one of the most effective strategies for slowing down naturally.

In brief, depending on the problems mentioned in this survey, it is expected that students can recognize their problems in communication and figure out the suitable strategies to communicate in English effectively.

## 6. REFERENCE

1. Aladdin's (2012) Communication strategies and their significance in foreign language teaching. *System*, 15 (3), 351-364.
2. Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.). *Language and communication* (pp. 2-27). Harlow, UK: Longman.
3. Celce Maurica, M., Briton, D., & Godwin, J. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other language*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge university press.
4. Færch, C., & Kasper, G. (1983a). *Strategies in interlanguage communication*. London and New York: Longman,
5. Lynch Tony. (1996). *Communication in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
6. Rubab'ah, (2003) *Acquiring Vocabulary*. Aston University.
7. Rubin and Thompson (1994) *Understanding the Courses We Teach: Local Perspectives on English Language Teaching*. University of Michigan Press.
8. Tubbs (2003) *Communicative competence and strategic competence*. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 1(10), 70-75.
9. Ur (1996). *Developing speaking skill through Reading (Vol 2)*. Canadian Center of Science and Education.