

THE DIFFICULTIES AND SOME SOLUTIONS IN SPEAKING FOR ENGLISH MAJORED FRESHMEN AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY IN VIET NAM

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, more and more people study English and it is considered as universal language, speaking is one of the skills that they want to be master. However, it is difficult to speak English fluently. To discuss the difficulties and give some solutions in speaking for English majored freshmen at Tay Do University, this study was conducted. The participants were eighty-four English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. The questionnaire was used as the main instrument. The results of the study showed that the first year students got many problems related to vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence. Based on the finding, some suggested solutions to help freshmen overcome difficulties and become good speakers.

Key words: *speaking, English majored freshmen, university*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

Nowadays, English is considered as universal language which is spoken in many countries in the world. It is as a main language of most international organizations like United Nations, European Free, and Trade Association and etc. In reality, the education attaches special importance to English, Ministry of Education and Training provided European level. In addition, Vietnam participated in WTO (World Trade Organization) and opened its markets to the outside world, many foreign companies have located in Viet Nam. These international companies often use English as a principal language to communicate in the office. Therefore, many students have the desire to use English fluently for their future jobs. Many students chose Bachelor of English to learn increasingly. One of the desires is speaking skill since according to Brown (1994), "*Speaking is one of the main points in communication.*"

As for the professional students of English, speaking English skill is extremely important because it is very necessary for their future work. Generally, speaking skill is one of the most difficult tasks for learners although they have good grammar and they can write English well, they cannot speak fluently in English. Charles and Lyle (2004) state, "*Speaking is also the most difficult language skill to assess reliably.*" In addition, according to Ririn (2009), "*Of the four languages skills listening, speaking, reading and writing; Speaking seems to be the one of the most important skills to master.*" The learners expect to use English fluently that demand themselves have to practice more than when they are still studying at university.

In the world, it is required that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and culture development. The bachelor of English, especially the first year English major ones seem to lack speaking skills. They may know the grammar and the

ideas written down, but they do not speak well. Their problems maybe relate to bad pronunciation, lack of confident, lack of vocabulary, etc.

For mentioned problems above, the research “Difficulties and some solutions in speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University” was carried to find out difficulties and give some suggestions to help the learners improve their speaking skill.

1.2 Aims of research

The research gave the importance of speaking skill in life. Besides, it aimed to find out the difficulties in studying speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University in order to give some suggestions for them to improve this important skill. The result would help students to be able to recognize their obstacles and overcome those problems as well. It is hoped the students will become good speakers thanks to the study.

1.3 Significance of the research

This research paper focuses on the difficulties and some solutions in speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. The result of the paper can become beneficial for learners in studying speaking. It can also help to find out possible solutions for their difficulties.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition and the importance of speaking

2.1.1 Definition of speaking

There are many speaking definitions in various ways. First of all, according to Oxford pocket dictionary, speaking is defined simply as “*talk to somebody about something; use your voice to say something*”. Form Oxford Dictionary of current English (2009, p.414), “*Speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing one’s thought and feeling in spoken language*”. Similarly, in Oxford Advantage Dictionary (p.13), “*Speaking is to express or communicate opinion, feelings, ideas, etc. by or as talking and it involves the activities in the part of the speakers as psychological, physiological and physical stages.*”

Carter and Nunan (2001) state that, “*Speaking in a second language involves the development of a particular type of communication skill.*” Widdowson (1984) adds that, “*Communication through speaking is performed face to face interaction and occurs as part of a dialogue or other form of verbal exchange.*”

In conclusion, speaking describes ideas, opinions, or feelings to others or to a particular matter, it means that one of man’s communication include the words to convey what the speakers mean. Similarly, speaking is basic to people’s communication. It is an interaction between two or more people in ideas and arguing changing.

2.1.2 The importance of speaking

Speaking is such an importance part in daily life, it has been considered as one of the most important skills in learning second language. Good communication skill brings out many benefits for learners, especially for future careers.

In daily life, people can express thoughts or ideas by speaking or writing. In fact, speaking is still primary communication means to other people. It is also a major part of everyday life. However, speaking is one of the most difficult skills in English. It is not easy to speak fluently. Gower et al. (1995) state that, “*Speaking is also a production skill consisting of two main aspects: accuracy and fluency.*”

In short, speaking plays a very important role in communication. And the basic way in studying English is that the learners can express their thoughts or ideas by many ways such as using body language, speaking or writing to friendly communicate with others.

2.2 The common difficulties in learning to speak English

It is difficult to speak English fluently. Especially, the English majored freshmen at Tay Do University can face many problems about lack of vocabulary, bad pronunciation, and lack of confidence in the process of learning to speak English.

2.2.1 Vocabulary

According to Hornby (1995), *“Vocabulary is the total number of word in a language.”* In addition, vocabulary is defined as the currency of communication. Having a large amount of words can improve all of skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, vocabulary mastery is very important because it is the basic language skill. It appears in every language. For learners of English, vocabulary is an indispensable factor in studying speaking English process. A large vocabulary helps learners to study better and easy success in life.

Wikms (1972) states that, *“Without grammar, very little can be conveyed. Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed.”* In fact, the learners have a sentence in mind, but they are missing two or three importance words it is difficult to say what they are thinking. In addition, if learners do not master vocabulary evidently they cannot utterance their purpose. In fact, learners cannot communicate with others because of poor vocabulary. Green and Meara (1995) say that, *“It is not surprising that learners consider English vocabulary as their greatest language problems.”* Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (1986) argue that, *“Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning.”*

Form the statement above, it can be said that mastering vocabulary is a basic part to learn good English skill. Moreover, vocabulary mastery is the key that learners can understand what they hear and speak, and to communicate successfully with other people. In fact, it is very difficult to communicate with others without vocabulary. Besides, learners may not feel confident enough to speak English when they lack vocabulary. For these reasons, it is sure that vocabulary is necessary to maintain speaking in English.

2.2.2 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the second difficult. It plays an importance in speaking English. If learners do not pronounce correctly, it can influence to the word meaning. Charles and Lyle (2004) state, *“Speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop. To speak in foreign language learners must master the sound system of the language.”* Hornby (1995) urges that pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken, the way in which a word is pronounced, the way a person speaks the words of language. In fact, the speakers will succeed in communication if they are good at pronunciation.

In addition, Avery and Ehrlich (1992) mention that, *“The role of the native language is very important to the second language pronunciation learning because the native language not only affects the ability to produce English sounds but also the ability to hear English sounds.”* Kenworthy (1987) also says that, *“Native language will be the most influential factor affecting a students’ pronunciation. If the students are familiar with the sound system of their native language, they will be able to diagnose their own difficulties.”* On the other hand, learners are often affected of native language speak so they speak different than native speakers do. Avery and Ehrlich (1987) urge that, *“The nature of which determined to a large extended by a learners’ native language. Then, native language of speakers may influence on the pronunciation of the target language.”*

Therefore, it is hard to pronounce English as the native speakers because when speaking English, learners not only consider about the pronunciation of individual words, but also relatedness between the words in the sentence. Avery and Ehrlich (1992) say that, *“Rhythm and intonation are also common problems for students in the world when they learn English.”* Moreover, intonation plays an important role in English language. The learners can change the meaning of a sentence with different intonation from the same sentence. Whenever the learners fail to give the correct intonation that can cause misunderstanding to the listeners.

Moreover, stress can fall on any syllable of word, and there is no orthographic indication to learn about English stress. Besides, learners often confused when they speak two words but the pronunciation quite the same because they do not pronounce the word exactly. For example, the learners are often mistaken between “wash” and “watch” when listening or speaking. Therefore, learners cannot recognize the main information in the conversation. Wong (1987) affirms that, *“Even when the non-native speakers’ vocabulary and grammar excellent, if their pronunciation falls below a certain level; they are unable to communicate effectively.”* In brief, pronunciation is very important in speaking English. If learners improve their pronunciation, they can speak English well.

2.2.3 Confidence

Confidence is an integral element that helps people make a great success in life. Especially, confidence helps learners to speak English well. Kelly and Watson (1986) state that, *“Students’ confidence is one of the factors to improve their learning.”* Almost of learners often feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in front of many people. Normally, learners usually tend to conceal their mistakes and weaknesses in front of crowded and this is the reason why learners’ ability in speaking English is limited. The feeling of shyness makes learners’ mind be empty and forget the words they want to speak. And this is also the cause that the learners do not keep calm down.

Moreover, lacking of confidence is the big problem by most students in speaking English. In reality, many Vietnamese students are not confident; although they spent much time to study English, they dare not express their ideas in the crowd. Many students think that their English is bad so they do not dare speak English in the classroom or in public places. It makes students embarrassed to express their opinions and also leads the failure in speaking performance of students. Therefore, they cannot speak English effectively.

In addition, their speaking ability can be influenced by attention and comment; when speaking in front of many people, they worry that people will laugh at them if they make mistakes. However, if a person never made a mistake, never make anything then he will not improve their life because one can learn from mistakes to get the better result. In conclusion, confidence is one of the main factors for learners to learn and improve speaking. In fact, self-confidence helps learners comfortable in communicating and certainly they will hold a half of success.

2.3. Some ways to improve speaking English

2.3.1 Ways to improve vocabulary

Vocabulary is a basic part to learn speaking English. Therefore, to speak English well, learners should learn more words. There are many ways to build vocabulary through a blend of methods as by using dictionary, learning some new words each day, reading many books, reading English newspapers and playing word games and puzzles.

Firstly, learners can make a friend with “a good dictionary”. To speak English fluently, learners should be using dictionary frequently. Students can use the dictionary will be continuing their learning outside the classroom. It is also useful as means of confirming contextual guesswork as a source to clarify uncertainty in areas of word meaning, pronunciation, grammar and spelling. Another word, when learners read entries for an unfamiliar word in a quality dictionary. It makes more interesting, so look for a dictionary that has lengthy explanation on the origins and use of words, these ways help learners remember the word and enjoy using their dictionary.

Secondly, to have a good out-put need to be sufficient in in-put. Therefore, learners have to learn some new words each day. They should learn at least one new word a day. They can start from essay English words and learn how to use this new word from sentence in essay. Learning to use it in a sentence can help students to be able to understand the meaning of the word. A good way is to learn words in families; example, classification such as fruits, flowers and vegetables. Another way to improve vocabulary is reading many books or reading newspaper. Students should try to read at least one book every week or reading the newspaper in free time. It not only improves vocabulary but only increase general knowledge. In fact, the more learners read, the larger they have vocabulary than other learners. Moreover, learners can also contribute vocabulary by playing word games and puzzles. Word puzzles are an excellent source of increasing vocabulary for students because the puzzle creators will often resort to an array of unusual words to ensure that the words fit into their puzzles. So, students need to think and guess the word based on the clues to fill in. Playing word games and puzzle helps students strengthening their word knowledge. Besides, learners can learn while

playing. That makes them interesting to learn. From the above methods; the learners can improve a large amount of vocabulary in speaking. However, these require themselves to practice regularly.

2.3.2 Ways to improve pronunciation

The speakers will not succeed in speak English if they are not good at pronunciation. There are many ways that can help learners improve their pronunciation. First of all, the learners are keeping practice their listening. They can listen to related topics as much as possible, then their pronunciation will naturally get closer and closer to native pronunciation. In addition, learners can listen to how speakers pronounce various words or sentences then practice how to pronounce the sounds exactly. Learner can listen carefully to what the speaker is saying and try to make the same sounds. Hear the sounds; do not try to see the words. Choose a word or sentence, and listen to it many times.

Besides, learners can improve their pronunciation by practice English daily. The only way that pronunciation will improve is practice, practice, and practice. Moreover, learners can improve their words stress easily when practice the sounds of English until they feel as natural and comfortable as sounds of their language; they will see the mistakes they have done. Similarly, Knight and Hayden (2004) state, "*Getting your students to learn and practice correct word stress is relatively easy way to improve their pronunciation.*" In conclusion, practicing pronunciation for the above ways will help learners improve very past.

2.3.3 Ways to improve confidence

Confidence is a factor that affects learning to speak English, so if learners really wants to speak English well, they must be confident. There are many things that can help to increase confidence. First, learners can practice speaking at home or anywhere they can. They can talk to themselves, it might feel ridiculous, but it is a good way to improve their confidence because any practice is good whether they speak to someone or not.

In addition, learners can improve confidence by practicing speaking with friends in groups or in pairs. That provides learners with a lot more practice than working as a whole class. It is very important to practice in low pressure situation as much as possible to build their confidence, so they will be confident in a higher pressure. In fact, studying in a group or in pairs, students can share ideas, get experience and knowledge, so students become more confident to speak front of others.

The purpose of speaking skill is creating students' communication. And, presentation is a popular way to communicate that helps learners more confident in life. Presentation is a great method for learners to master their confidence in communication. In fact, when standing in front of many people to present, learners will create a communication. Presentation will help the learners achieve their goal of staying calm, cool and collected during their speech. Confidence as well as intelligence to solve situations that constitute in presentation. Wajnryb (1992) sates that, "*Students can feel more confident when speaking English in front of people when they have prepared the subject to say. In brief, presentation will help students improve their confidence as well.*"

Finally, learners can also practice speaking English with foreigners to improve confidence. Communication with someone, especially with foreigners will help learners develop their confidence. When communicating with foreigners, learners can learn from foreigners many things such as pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. Firstly, the students will learn from the way they pronounce word. Form that, learners will be able to understand and imitate foreigners' accents whenever they speak. Secondly, learners can enlarge their vocabulary very much when communicating with foreigners because the foreigners often use different words to told about something. For these reasons above, learners can widen their knowledge so much that helps them increate confidence. In short, confidence is integral elements that cannot lack in speaking English process. Therefore, the learners have to try to improve confidence by these ways above.

In sum up, speaking is an important skill for learners who study English as a foreign language. Although learners use this skill most in real life, they often get more problems for many reasons. Therefore, literature review shows some difficulties that the first year students at Tay Do University can face when they study to speak English. Some difficulties that they get can be related to vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence. In addition, some suggestions are also presented to overcome these difficulties.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research question

Speaking skill is important in our life. Good speakers can get many benefits such as having a high prize in profession, communicating with everyone in other countries easily, etc. However, speaking is one of the most difficulty skills of language in learning English. The aim of the research was to record problems students faced and gave some suggestions for them to overcome these difficulties. The study was conducted to find out the answer for the question:

“What are the difficulties and some solutions of the first year students at Tay Do University in studying speaking?”

3.2 Participant

The population was eighty-four freshmen Bachelors of English at Tay Do University consisting of 68 females and 16 males. Their ages range from 18 to 20. They all speak Vietnamese as their native tongue and English is considered as their foreigner language. The students have been studying English for 8 to over 10 years.

At Tay Do university, students studied four periods (each period lasts 50 minutes) a week and there were about 30 students in a class. Therefore, students did not have much chances to practice speaking skill. Most of students were taught from the primary school and some of them had learned English in language centers, or private tuitions, etc. Thus, these students had more chances to practice and their speaking skill was better. Then, the participants had unequal level when learning speaking skill because of the differences among their ability background of learning English.

3.3 Research instrument

The questionnaire was the instrument to find out students' problems and solutions in learning speaking English at Tay Do University. The questionnaire is a common means of collecting data. Nunan (1992) affirms that, “*Questionnaire helps the researcher collect data in field settings and the data themselves are more amenable to quantification than discursive data such as participant observes' journals, the transcript of oral language.*”

The questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions. Eighty-four copies of questionnaire in English were given to freshmen in the English majored classes at Tay Do University, and all were collected. They were carefully prepared and classified into the following groups:

Table 1: The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 6	Students' background
From 7 to 10	Difficulties in speaking skill
From 11 to 14	Suggested ways to improve speaking skill

4. RESULTS

4.1. Students' background

4.1.1 Students' time of studying

The data collection from the questionnaire showed that the time that freshmen have studied English is very different. 41,7% of freshmen have studied English up to 7 years and 58,3% of them have studied English for more than years. In reality, if freshmen have learnt English for 7 years, they could have learnt English from grade 6th. If freshmen were

taught English before grade 6th, it means they had more than 7 years for studying English. It is good for students because they have been learning English for a long time.

4.1.2 Students’ attitude toward speaking skill

Speaking is one of the most difficult skills in learning a foreigner language. It is easy for freshmen to recognize the importance of speaking. When answering the question about the importance of the English speaking skill. The result was a little surprised because only 8,3% answered that speaking skill was on average; 32,2% confirmed that speaking skill was important; 59.5% agreed that speaking was very important. In fact, speaking skill is an important part in language.

Furthermore, speaking is not an easy skill. In question, “Do you think speaking is the most difficult?” 67,9% of students said “Yes” and only 32,1% said “No”. Although they had a long time for studying English in high school, they found speaking English difficult.

In question, “Which skills in English do you like best?” 51,1%. of freshmen liked speaking; 15,5% liked listening; 11,9% chose reading; the remaining 21,5% liked writing. However, number of freshmen who recognized speaking benefits occupied the highest. Most of freshmen loved studying English since they knew the purpose of learning English is to communicate; they can talk to anyone who speaks English.

In fact, all students always want to succeed in studying foreign languages. Speaking skill is probably the biggest problem to learn English. Practicing time is one of the main parts that help to success. However, it is not easy to become the good students because they have to practice as much as possible. An obstacle making students have a low ability of speaking is the laziness in practicing speaking English. They just practice whenever they are obliged. Freshmen cannot speak English well if they do not practice frequently. According to the result of the question, “Do you practice speaking a lot?” showed that students hardly spent time on practicing speaking. There were 51,1% practicing speaking in class. 27,4% rarely spoke, so they could not speak well. It was surprising that 1,2% never practice speaking. Only 20,3% of them who spoke English more fluently than others chose “Yes, everyday”.

4.1.3 Students’ ability of speaking skill

When students learn a foreign language, they will meet a new environment. Therefore, they face many problems in studying process. English is considered as a usual language to communicate, but it is difficult to speak English fluently. In fact, from high school students were taught from different methods then the knowledge they got also not the same. Only 23,8% of freshmen confirmed that the ability of speaking was good. The biggest number (65,5%) were at average. And 10,7% showed that their speaking skill was bad. This result showed that most freshmen face problems in speaking skill.

4.2 The difficulties in speaking English

In speaking English, there are many factors affecting to learner’s speaking skill. In the questionnaire, some common difficulties that freshmen usually faced in studying process were mentioned as vocabulary, pronunciation and confidence. They could choose more than one answer. The results of questionnaire were showed below:

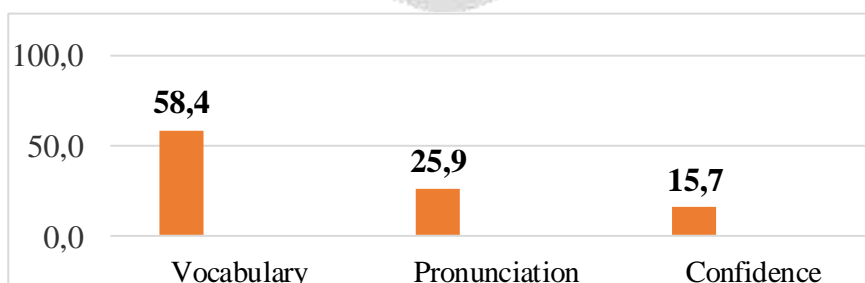


Figure 1: Common difficulties in speaking English

When learning speaking skill, there were many factors affecting on it. Regarding to figure 1, the highest score of the freshmen met difficulties with vocabulary (58,4%). Vocabulary is considered as the biggest problem to freshmen speaking English. In fact, vocabulary is an element that cannot lack in studying speaking English process. If freshmen lack of vocabulary, they cannot express their idea. Inversely, learners can communicably success and their conversation will be more interesting if they have enough words to use in speaking. The figure showed more than half of students got difficulties in vocabulary. It meant that without word was the main factor causing difficulties for learners in speaking English.

The second problem affecting learners' speaking ability was pronunciation. Indeed, accurate pronunciation plays a very important role in speaking because speaker will not transfer information effectively as well their ideas, thoughts to the listeners if they do not have a standard pronunciation. However, it is very difficult to be good at pronunciation. In fact, students have faced many problems to pronounce English criteria. The result of the questionnaire showed that 25,9% of participants faced problems in pronunciation when speaking English. In reality, when the students present in front of class, they usually make mistakes with pronunciation. This also made the students very difficult in communicating.

On the other hand, confidence is the condition that cannot lack in presenting because it helps the students can express all their ability in front of many people. Besides, self-confidence helps students more comfortable in communicating and that is the key for making a great success in life. From the statistic in figure 1 above, only 15,7% of participants who could not be confident when speaking with others by English. Maybe they were afraid of speaking in learning process because they could be afraid of making mistakes. These reasons made them unconfident in communicating by English. Let's find more detail in each difficulty.

4.2.1 Difficulties in vocabulary

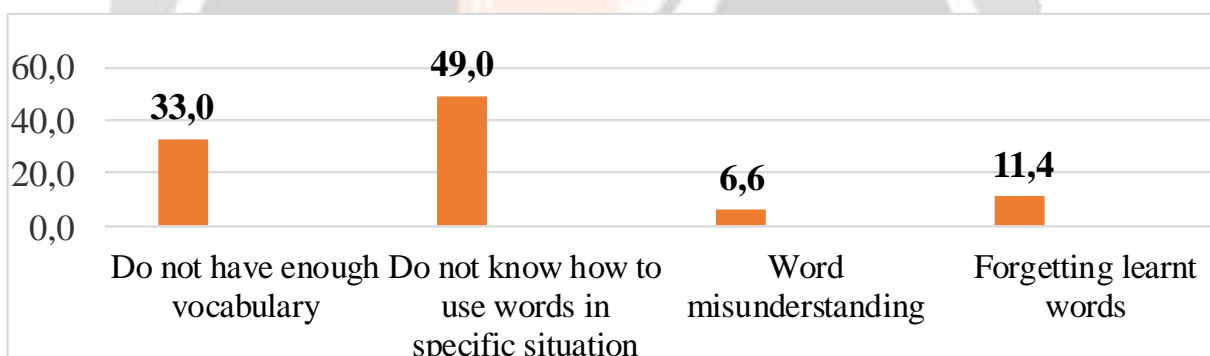
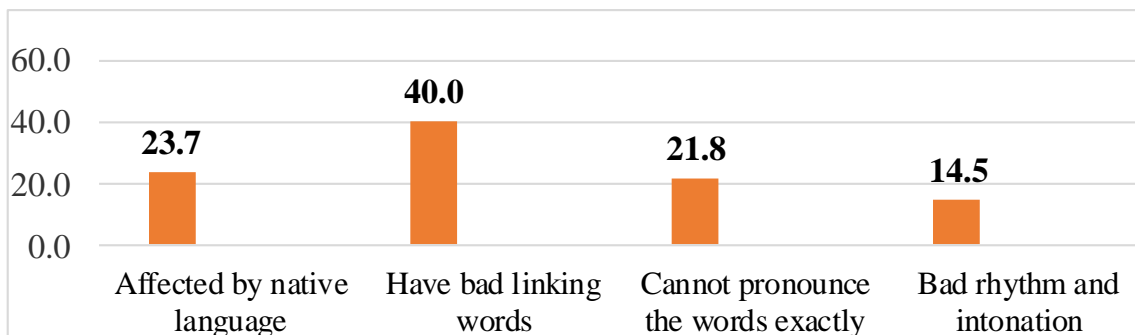


Figure 2: Difficulties in vocabulary

The figure showed difficulties in vocabulary of freshmen in learning speaking. Most of them knew many words, but they did not know how to use those words in specific situation (49%) so they could not speak English fluently. Moreover, 33% of the participants did not have enough vocabulary so they could not speak well. In addition, students also forgot learnt word when speaking English in front of many people (11,4%). A few freshmen got word misunderstanding between some similar words in English (6,6%). In reality, the biggest students' difficulties in vocabulary were having many words but did not know how to use because they could not use or understand the words deeply.

4.2.2 Difficulties in pronunciation

Figure 3: Difficulties in pronunciation



Looking into the figure above, 40% of freshmen chose the bad linking word was the factor affecting to their pronunciation. If students did not use linking word when they were presenting speaking English, this makes them different when communicating with the foreigners. It also affected to listeners. The second mean score was affected of native language with 23,7%. In addition, 21,8% could not pronounce the word exactly and the lowest mean score was bad rhythm and intonation with 14,5%. In fact, almost of the students had to face problems in pronunciation. Students cannot pronounce the word exactly because the sounds of English are very different from the sounds in their native language. Moreover, students used a piece of paper when presenting in front of class, it may make their intonation and rhythm be not good. They were not really use linking word in speaking English.

4.2.3 The difficulties when presenting in front of many people

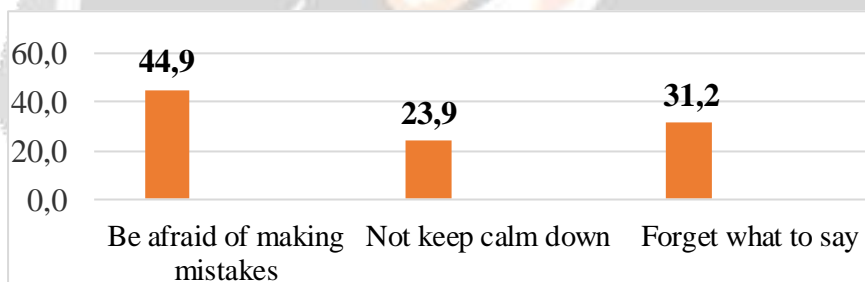


Figure 4: The difficulties when presenting in front of many people

As in the above figure, 44,9% considered afraid of making mistakes as the biggest to their confidence. Moreover, 31,2% forgot they words that they were going to say. The lowest factor was not keep calm down with 23,9%. In fact, almost of students were afraid of speaking English in front of class because of making mistakes or forgetting words that make people would laugh at their fault. Therefore, they used a paper when presenting in class. In fact, confidence plays an integral element for students to speak English. Lack of confidence makes students becoming passive ones. Self-confidence helps students to overcome these fears when presenting in the crowd and to become active students. In fact, students could not be good speakers if they were not confident.

In short, freshmen faced difficulties in speaking related to vocabulary, pronunciation and confidence. First, students lacked vocabulary which led to the problems that they could not express what they wanted to say. Besides, pronunciation of the students was not good, so they could not speak English fluently and exactly. Moreover, they did not have enough confidence and their vocabulary disappeared or word misunderstanding when responding in front of many people.

4.3 The ways to improve speaking English

There are many methods to improve speaking English skill. The questionnaire gave some solutions to help freshmen get better speaking English skill. The participants could choose more than one answer.

4.3.1 The ways to improve vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important role in speaking English, so having a wide knowledge of vocabulary means that students can speak English better. The effective way to improve vocabulary is to use it as often as possible. In class, students did not have enough time to studying. So wherever possible they should improve their vocabulary. Reading more books,

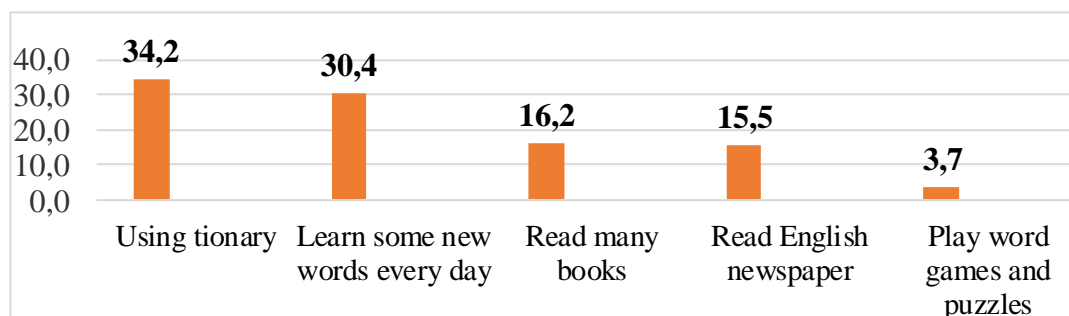


Figure 5: The ways to improve vocabulary

playing word games and puzzles, looking up words in the dictionary, and learn some new words each day are all good ways to learn new words.

One of the best ways to improve vocabulary is to use the dictionary frequently. Read entries forms of unfamiliar words and practice them anywhere as much as possible. Practice words in a variety of environments so that learners learn them. In figure 5, with 34,2% of the participant used the dictionary to contribute to their vocabulary. It can be easy and favorable when a good dictionary makes a friendship with the learners.

Another simple way to improve vocabulary is learning some new words each day. If learners make a habit of learning new words, they will be richer words day by day. They can begin from easy English words and learning words in families is the good ways to memorize words effectively. The result from the questionnaire proclaimed that 30,4% of participants thought that learning some new words each day is a good method to improve vocabulary.

In addition, reading more books is directly linked with larger words. Therefore, reading books and newspapers in English are good ways of improving English vocabulary. In fact, reading English newspaper may help students to learn a lot of vocabulary, raise their reading skill for finding the points, or increase reading speed, etc. Another benefit is that learners can learn new things or knowledge from newspaper articles. Basing on the result, 15,5% of students concurred that reading English newspapers would be good for new words. Moreover, students seek out books in unfamiliar genres or about unfamiliar topics. It also provides them new words and general knowledge. However, they did not often read many books to improve their vocabulary (16,2%). Certain of those students read novels, comics and stories to improve speaking skill.

Moreover, playing word games and puzzles is a fun way to learn new words, but only 3,7% of the participants were playing word games and puzzles. Playing word games will encourage their brain to play with words and letters, as well as learning new words. Word puzzles include crosswords, simple cryptology puzzles, and jumbles that get progressively harder. Word puzzles can also be done in groups; especially it is good if learners enjoy competition. Therefore, playing word games and puzzles help learners to increase their word knowledge. They will be interested in these activities because they can learn while playing.

4.3.2 The ways to improve pronunciation

If students want to be able to speak English fluently, they need to be able to pronounce correctly. Good pronunciation is needed to communicate the message and understood by other speakers. The figure below shows some ways to improve pronunciation.

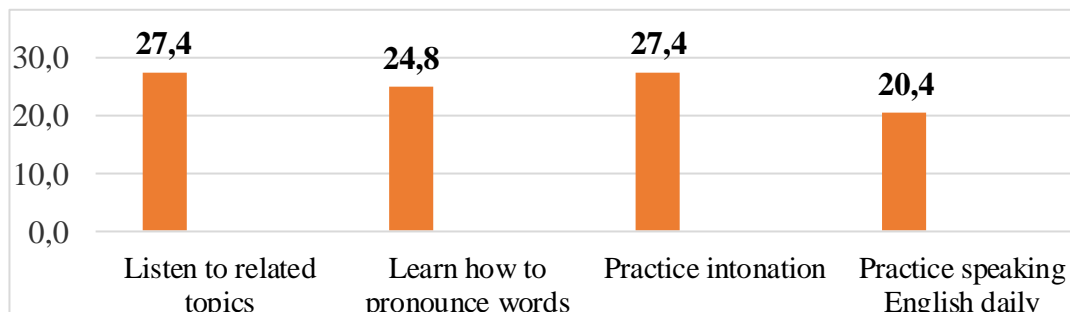


Figure 6: The ways to improve pronunciation

Firstly, students should listen to related topics more often that helps their pronunciation be closer to native pronunciation. In addition, learners can listen to CD and radio channels or listen to online program to improve pronunciation. The chart showed that 27,4% of students listening to related subject to improve pronunciation.

In addition, some English sounds or words that do not exist in the mother language, so learners have to face the difficulty to pronounce when they speak English. Practicing pronounce the sounds exactly is a good method to improve pronunciation. Therefore, the learners try to make the sounds similarly with the sound in the native language. When the learners know all the sounds of English and the symbols that represent those sounds, they will be able to pronounce any word in English. There were 24,8% of the students who chose practicing the sound exactly to get better speaking.

Moreover, intonation and words stress should be focused when studying a language. The learners should focus not only on how to make the different sounds, but also how to stress a word. It is essential to realize the word exactly. 27,4% students agreed that practicing intonation and learning how to stress a word were good way for their pronunciation.

Furthermore, practicing speaking English daily is the best way to become the good speaker. A good way to practice is to get an audio sample with transcript. Listen to one or two sentences, then pause the audio and try to repeat the sentences exactly as the speaker said. Also making friends with foreigners is a good way to speak English. However, only 20,4% of the students selected practicing English daily.

4.3.3 The ways to improve confidence

Although speaking in front of class is difficult, it is possible when freshmen have enough confidence. Therefore, confidence is an important part that affects to speak in English. There are many ways to help freshmen get more confident. The figure below shows some ways to improve confidence.

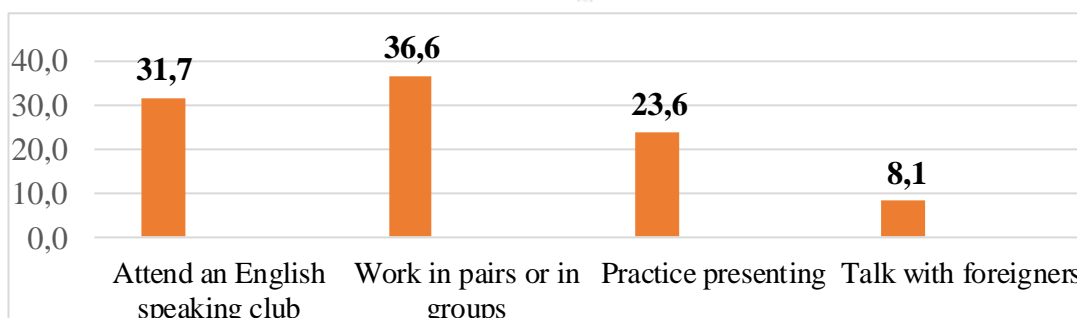


Figure 7: The ways to improve confidence

First of all, freshmen can attend an English speaking club frequently to improve their confidence. The more they speak, the better their English will become. The better they speak, the more confident they will be at speaking English. When being in a club, students can think of some nature ways to speak English in daily. The result in Figure 7 showed that 31,7% of the participants agreed that attending an English speaking club is a way to improve confidence.

Second, students can improve confidence by working in groups or pairs. If students regularly practice with their friends, they will be more confident in speaking English. They feel free to share many more ideas as well as experience in the topics, then they will not be afraid of mistakes. Moreover, students feel more comfortable to speak to a few people rather than the whole class and the teacher. In fact, there were 36,6% of students who liked working in groups or pairs to improve confidence.

In fact, practicing speaking before many people, even it is rather uncomfortable as a way to practice with groups or pairs but it is the most effective way to improve their confidence. Presentation is a good way to make students more confident in communicating. However, it is difficult to succeed in presentation. The presentation put learners in an active state that require them to speak aloud and fluently in the crowd. Through that students will gain strength, courage and confidence. The figure above showed that 23,6% thought that presenting helped them improve confidence.

Moreover, the best way to increase confidence is communicating with foreigners. When the students practice with the foreigners, they can learn many things such as pronunciation, vocabulary or enlarge knowledge. Feeling afraid, nervous, and anxious, all of that is part of being human normal. If students can talk with foreigners that means they are actually speaking English and improving, but only 8,1% chose talking with foreigners. Maybe it is difficult for freshmen to find a foreigner who is willing to talk to them.

In short, through the results from the questionnaire, most English majored freshmen got many problems related to vocabulary, pronunciation and confidence when studying to speak English. Through the difficulties, some solutions to improve speaking skill were suggested.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1 Conclusion

The research aimed to find difficulties and some solutions in speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. It could be found that most of participants considered speaking skill as one of the most difficult subject to their major. They focused on speaking because of many reasons such as having to get a good job, to communicate with foreigners, etc. In fact, during the time of studying speaking skill, they got many difficulties as lack of vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence and always tried to find the solutions to resolve their problems to get better speaking in English.

5.1.1 Lack of vocabulary

Firstly, almost of participants showed that vocabulary was the biggest problem in speaking English (58,4%). In fact, the participants did not have enough vocabulary (33%) then they could not express ideas and opinions well. In addition, students could have many words but did not know how to use them in specific situation (49%) or word misunderstanding (6,6%) because they would not pay attention to meaning and using of the words. Besides, they might forget learnt words (11,4%) because they could not have more time to practice. In fact, students would not be confident enough to speak English when they lacked vocabulary. Moreover, it was not easy to communicate with other people fluently if they did not have enough vocabulary.

The freshmen could overcome some difficulties relating to lack of vocabulary by using the dictionary (34,2%) or reading many books (16,2%) and newspapers written in English (15,5%) to remember the words, improve their vocabulary and remember their meanings. In addition, they learnt a few words each day (30,4%) or played word games and puzzles (3,7%) to widen their vocabulary.

5.1.2 Lack of pronunciation

Secondly, students got many problems in studying speaking English because of poor pronunciation (25,9%). Almost of students were affected by native language (23,7%). So they could not speak English well and made others misunderstand because they did not pronounce the word exactly (21,8%). The learners usually made many mistakes in pronunciation such as linking word (40%), rhythm and intonation (14,5%) and so on. Therefore, the listeners might not understand what the learners were speaking.

To communicate effectively and to solve the problem about pronunciation, learners should choose some methods like listening to related subject (27,4%), learning how to pronounce a word (24,8%), practicing the intonation and stress a word exactly (27,4%). In addition, the methods learners like to use to improve their pronunciation was practicing speaking English daily (20,4%).

5.1.3 Lack of confidence

Thirdly, students got many difficulties in speaking relating to confidence (15,7%). They had to face many difficulties when presenting in front of many people. Firstly, many students were afraid of making mistake (44,9%) because they were worry that people would laugh at them if they made mistakes. In addition, they did not keep calm down (23,9%) and forgot word when they presented in front of the crowded (31,2%).

To improve their confidence in studying speaking English, learners should attend an English speaking club (31,7%), work in groups or pairs (36,6%), practice presenting frequently (23,6%), and talk with foreigners whenever they have chances (8,1%).

5.2 Suggestions for further research

There are many other ways that have not been mentioned in this study. Further research should focus on some more difficulties which students face in speaking skill and find the suitable methods to overcome of other participants as English majored sophomores or English majored juniors. Besides, the further research should employ more instruments for students to get more reliable result. Moreover, further researchers should study about the ways to improve listening, then all helps students become master in communication.

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