

# THE DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH SPEAKING OF ENGLISH MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY

PHAN Thi Minh Uyen  
NGUYEN Thi Thuy Hang  
TRAN Dai Loc

## ABSTRACT

Speaking is said to be an indispensable subject, which partly contributes to the success of learning English and daily communications. However, it is not easy to master this skill and students may face many problems in speaking English. Therefore, the research “**The difficulties in English speaking of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University**” aim to be conducted to help sophomores to recognize their own problems in speaking, and find out suitable ways to avoid these problems. The participants of study are English majored sophomores from class 14A at Tay Do University. In study process, questionnaire is used as instruments to collect the data. The result of the research will show the difficulties in English speaking of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University. Besides, the teachers can also know the problems of their students to changing method and find out some effective solutions in order to help students improve English speaking.

**Key words:** speaking skill, difficulties, English majored sophomores, university

---

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

(This chapter includes Rationale, The significant of the research and The organization of the research)

### 1.1 Rationale

English is considered as an international language and widely used in many fields including business, science, politics and media all over the world. Therefore, English is globally acknowledged to be the most popular language for all the times. Nowadays, in the globalization era, due to the demand of international integration, English increasingly becomes the most desirable language to be mastered. Many schools and universities around the world have chosen English as a compulsory subject in their national academic curriculums. Furthermore, English is considered as a tool to connect people all over the world. Everybody spends time studying English to get a good job and find opportunities working in other countries. So, English plays a very crucial role and becomes more demandable.

A common problem encountered by a great number of non- English as well as native English speaker use English as an important medium of international communication is every part of the world. English is no longer the language used solely in English speaking countries; rather it is internationally used. As the English language has become an essential factor in strengthening trade and travel in many countries, the necessity of knowing and using this communication through modern technology and media communication devices such as mobile telephone, electronic mail and the Internet. Undoubtedly, people around the world need English as the main medium of their communication via devices.

For this reason, speaking is an important skill for the people who are learning English because in verbal communication we cannot communicate with each other without understanding them. Therefore, learning English

are very important and necessary because mastering English seems to be one of the best and the shortest ways for us to have a great deal of opportunities to reach the success of life. As for Vietnamese students, especially the second-year students have many difficulties in learning and practicing English speaking skill. They also fall into confusion when speaking English because of their lack of professional knowledge, confidence and surely good learning methods.

The goal of studying speaking, surely, is to improve the oral production of the student. Students should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation. Speaking well also helps students to access up information in fields including science, technology and health. Good English speakers will be in a strong position to help their country's economic, social and political development. So by learning to speak English well, students are able to gain a valuable skill which can be useful for their career and contribute to their communication and country. Nowadays, many English learners in Vietnam are afraid to communicate in English. Even though many students who have learned English to advance levels, they cannot speak English freely.

Especially for English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, most of learners come from countryside and they do not have a lot of opportunities to practice speaking at high school. That is the reason why students always feel worried, uncomfortable and unconfident when speaking English. They also often complain that they cannot speak English well because they spend much time on thinking ideas in Vietnamese and translating them into English before speaking out. Even though many students who have learned English for a long time, they cannot speak English fluently.

Thus, the research "**The difficulties in English speaking of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University**" is conducted to help the Sophomores majoring in English at Tay Do university provide an overview of difficulties in speaking skill.

From that, the researcher hopes that the sophomores can based on these difficulties in order to improve their speaking ability in learning English and communicating as well.

## **1.2 The significant of the research**

The research carried out to help English majored sophomores at Tay Do University recognize the problems of speaking English. Through the research, students can know how to avoid their problems in speaking English. From this, students can figure out appropriate methods to communicate in English effectively.

## **1.3 The organization of the research**

This research includes 5 chapters consisting of

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research Aims, Research Question and Hypothesis

Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter 5: Expected outcome

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

(This chapter consists of Definition of speaking and its importance, Difficulties of speaking and Previous Studies)

#### 2.1 Definition of speaking and its importance

##### 2.1.1 Definition of speaking

Nowadays, English is one of the most important compulsory subjects in Vietnam education. With four main skills, speaking is one of the productive skills in learning English. According to Chaney 1998 said that *“speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in a variety of context”*. It indicates that speaking is the process of exchanging information verbally, through words can help the listener understand the thought and views of the speakers correctly in specific circumstances. Another definition from the book Colins Cobuild English for advanced learner (2007) was that *“speaking is the activities of giving speeches and talks; to indicate the opinion you are giving”*.

In addition, Brown & Yule (1983) considered that *“speaking is the capacity of a speaker to tell something well to other persons as his listeners, there by listener can catch or understand his message or what he says and then give a response ad evidence that the oral communication could run smoothly. The speaker expresses his needs and communication at least in short bursts”*. And from Oxford dictionaries *“speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching”*

It is obvious that speaking is the key means of human communication. It enables people to express their feelings, opinions and to communicate with other people in the world. According Lightbown & Spada (2006, p.39) consider that *“They notice that speaking skill is not simple like it seems, it is a complicated process including choosing words, pronouncing and stringing them together with the appropriate grammatical makers”*. Because in constant communication we do not

have time to consider using correct grammar, and choosing words to make the listener understand and interact well. On the other hand, Konstantin (2010), states that *“speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing thought and feeling in spoken languages”*.

Besides, Chastain (1976) states that *“Learning speaking is obviously more difficult that learning to understand the spoken language”*. Although it is difficulties but it can be achieved by doing much practice in real situation.

In short, speaking is the process of exchanging information between giving and receiving of the speakers and the listeners. In the process that the speakers will share their view and the listeners will receive such information and listeners will share more about their view and thoughts. Depending on the specific circumstances that bring benefits different. Therefore, speaking is main skill for learning English and people who want to speak English well, it means that they will get a stable job and a location in modern society.

##### 2.1.2 The importance of English speaking skill

Speaking is one of the most essential skills and English is one of the main factors in communication and it is essential in life. Nowadays, English is appeared in all aspects of education, business, commerce, communication, culture, health care, for all day-to-day activities. Especially, speaking English is a main problem more than ever in today's modern life. Besides, Gerald Gillis (2013) explained that *“speaking skills are important for career success, but certainly not limited to one's professional aspirations. Speaking skills can enhance one's personal life, there by bringing about the well-rounded growth, we should all seek”*.

Firstly, English can help people become closer and understand each other better. Especially, it is a bridge between people from different countries with different language. Secondly, if students learn English, they have more job opportunities and speak English fluently. So, the problem of employment is no longer their obsession in the future

because English is widespread language in the modern life. Finally, English can help people communicate, learn and discuss all areas with easily and effectively

Furthermore, more and more educators, government, ministries of education and employers need people who can speak English well. Companies and organizations want to staff who can speak English well in order to communicate within the international marketplace. Students who can speak English well may have a greater chance to further education, finding employment and gaining promotion. In daily day people cannot live without communication and to communicate people have to speak and speak. In addition, (Louma, 2004) said that, *“the important of spoken performance of a language is becoming more prominent reflects a person's personality, self-image, knowledge of the world, ability to reason, skill express thoughts in real-time”*.

In addition, when students speak English well, then they will succeed in business and life. Above all, they will be built good relationship in society filled with harsh requirements. If direct exchange is one of professional way, it will contribute to the conversation more relaxed. So, it can be said that, English is used widely and speaking English good is the most solid momentum on the way to success.

## **2.2 Difficulties in English speaking skill**

In learning English as a foreign language, it is not easy to be a good learner, especially communicating with English speaking people. For the English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, they have already faced some difficulties. In this research, common difficulties are analyzed that most of students meet in communicating with English speaking people.

### **2.2.1 Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is one of the most important factors when people begin to learn a new language, like English, Rubin and Thompson (1994, p.79) point out, *“One cannot speak, understand, read and write a foreign language without knowing a lot of words”*. In fact, knowledge of vocabulary is a tool to help students have the ability to set and communicate successfully. 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 thing to be taught in learning language because it will be impossible to speak up without a variety of words”*.

Moreover, vocabulary is a section affecting English speaking skill, but the usually have a few difficulties in vocabulary learning. One of the difficulties are students are afraid of speaking English because they do not have many vocabulary so students cannot speak out their ideas and thoughts well. That is the main reason why the students only keep thinking inside and cannot speak a full sentence in English. On the other hand, a word not only has a meaning but also has different meaning in particular context or situation. The students do not have the effective ways to learn vocabulary, so students usually have a problem in choose or identify the suitable vocabulary rapidly when they speak in a conversation. "In order to become an effective learner, one must understand a broader range of vocabulary". Besides, poor vocabulary knowledge is not sufficient to express ideas makes student frustrated when they learn English.

In short, vocabulary is a main key in the process of learning language in common and English in particular. A great vocabulary provides language learners the suitable words to use at the right context, and enables them to express their thoughts, opinion, and feelings. To summarize, vocabulary play a key role in understanding a language, learning speaking as well as in communication.

### **2.2.2 Grammar**

Grammar is rules of words and how words are combined together in language. For that reason, grammar is one of the principal elements in speaking English, because English grammar is the body of rules that describe the structure of expressions in the English language. According to James (2005:2) *“Grammar is a study of structure of the language and describes the way of putting words together to make meaning sentences”*. When approaching to a new language like English, learners study grammar. If learners do not have good knowledge of grammar, they

meet many difficulties in using different and appropriate structures. In the contrast, If learners have good knowledge of grammar, they will study English well by using different and appropriate structures in forming sentences. It also helps them recognize sentence structures and understand easily what speakers are saying. Longman (2003) considered that *“grammar is the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences or the study or are of these rules”*. People express their thought and ideas in sentences. Sentences are made by grouping and arranging words. Thus, grammar is the fundamental part in learning speaking English.

The grammatical rules of English language are not the same as Vietnamese grammar; it is more difficult for students to use English grammar proficiently. Students usually do not know how to apply the grammatical rules to make sentences so they frequently use Vietnamese structures to make sentences in English when communicating with others because their mother tongue grammar has a strong influence on communicating with English speaking people. Besides, most Vietnamese students face obstacles in speaking English due to their limited background knowledge of grammar. Students easily get confused with English grammar, while it is very needed to form a right sentence. If the students do not have good grammar, they will be unable to produce sentences that grammatically right. They often have a lot of mistakes such as singular and plural forms, errors in tense, parts of speech, and the way to arrange parts of speech to make right sentences... etc. It means if language learners make ungrammatical sentence, listeners will not understand what they say.

In conclusion, grammar is one of the important factors in speaking English although it is not the most important element. Hence, people who have knowledge of grammar well that help them improve skills like speaking, listening, reading, writing. Therefore, the learners as well as sophomores should recognize their grammar problems and find out suitable methods to overcome.

### 2.2.3 Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays an important role for students who want to be good at both speaking and listening. If the students have good pronunciation, they can make the message in a conversation easy to understand for the listener and build confidence for the speaker. According to Hornby (1974) *“pronunciation is a way in which a language is spoken, person's way of speaking a language or words of a language”*. Besides, the first impression is extremely important when they speak with new people. They will know straight away their professional level by listening to the way how to they pronounce English words. They can hide their limited vocal and grammar weakness, but they cannot hide bad pronunciation. Therefore, incorrect pronunciation can cause the students to be poorly perceived and understood by others, which contributes students' failure in speaking English.

Actually, most Vietnamese learners have face difficulties in their pronunciation. They do not have enough self-confidence to speak in public because they do not know how to pronounce a certain word well. There are many reasons make them to get mistakes in pronunciation. Firstly, the English sound system has several different sounds from Vietnamese speakers. Moreover, Students are affected by the mother tongue when pronouncing words in English. Also, students often skip to pronounce the final consonants of English words. The final consonants are very important to help the listeners to know which words are being mentioned.

For instance, if they want to say "right" but without the final sound "t", it may be understood as "price", "great" may become "gray", "get" becomes "guess". Moreover, they also make mistakes in word stress. It is one of the difficulties which students often get it. Stressing the wrong syllable in a word can make the word very difficult to hear and understand. For example the word "interesting", the correct stress should be placed on "in" /*in*teresting/ but many people place it on "res" /in*ter*esting/ instead.

Besides, intonation also is a common problem in speaking English. Intonation is crucial for communication. It is also believed to be *“the rises and falls in tone that make the 'tune' of an utterance, it is an important aspect of pronunciation of English, often making a difference to meaning or implication”* (Chen, 1983:143). However Courtyard & Johns (1980) also argue that *“intonation in English might also convey a speaker's involvement in a conversation as well as desire to take turn of talk or leave the conversation Intonation is a significant feature in English”*. When they know clearly their intonation, we can guess their feeling, their emotion to communicate effectively.

In fact, in Vietnam, they speak all Vietnamese words almost with the same volume. On the other hand, English is a very musical language they need to raise their voice up and down or else, native speakers will start complaining that their English is too monotonous and they do not sound like a native speaker.

To summarize, pronunciation is a common difficult of English majored student in learning speaking because it directly affects their speaking ability. And it is undeniable that the pronunciation is a main key leading to the success of communication. Therefore, students should practice pronunciation regularly to develop pronunciation better.

### **2.2.4 Spiritual difficulties**

#### **Lack of confidence**

Confidence is the foundation in life, lacking confident can cause to get discouraged and give up. Also in communication with English speaking people, lack of confidence makes us feel confused and cannot speak English fluently, Besides, English- majored sophomores at Tay Do University also have difficulties in lack of confidence when they communicate with English speaking people. They often feel confused worried when speaking with native speaker. So they often use "uhm" in speaking performance. Additionally, many students often afraid of making mistakes and being laughed by their friend when having a speaking performance and they feel pressured whenever they answer their partner's question in English. Finally, in some case,

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH AIMS-RESEARCH QUESTIONS-HYPOTHESIS**

(This chapter consist of Research aims, Research questions and Hypothesis)

#### **3.1 Research aims**

When learning English, students often face many difficulties in the process of speaking. This is the reason why students cannot speak English well. The research aim is to find out the common difficulties of English sophomores at Tay Do University in speaking English.

#### **3.2 Research question**

1. *This research is conducted to answer the following research question:*
2. *What are common difficulties in English speaking of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University?*

#### **3.3 Hypothesis**

Learning English is not easy process in our country which teaches just as a foreign language. That is a hard learning process. Therefore, students should not be self-conscious with their mistakes when speaking English. Through this research, the researcher hopes that learners will overcome their problems. Thanks to this study, sophomores can have a positive attitude in learning English.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Design**

The study will be conducted to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis mentioned in chapter 3. This is a descriptive study and the instruments are a questionnaire. Participants in this study are students in English 14A

of Tay Do University. The data from the participants will be collected through the questionnaire. The collected data of these instruments will be analyzed to show their how to way learners improving speaking skill.

#### 4.2 Participants

The participants of this research will be about 45 English majored sophomores course 14 (2019-2023) at Tay Do University. They all learn English as a second language beside mother language, Vietnamese. They have studied English from 7 to 15 years and they came from many different places. Their ages are 20 years old. Despite the different English levels and learning methods, most of students were not focused on improving speaking skill in high school. For this reason, they got many difficulties in the process of speaking English. In addition, when the study is conducted, the students are studying English Speaking Course in the first semester. The main material of English speaking is the Speak Now 2 book; communicate with the confidence, Jack. C. Richards David Bohlke, Oxford. Students will be required to answer the questionnaire and interview to support information about “The difficulties in English speaking of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University”.

#### 4.3 Instruments

The instruments of this research include a questionnaire. They are used to collect the participants’ ideas. With the aim of research, questionnaire focused on finding out the students’ difficulties in English speaking.

#### 4.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 8 questions and 13 statements and it is classified into the following groups:

Group	Summary of the content of question group
From 1-8	Student’s personal information
From 9-11	Difficulties in grammar
From 12-15	Difficulties in vocabulary
From 16-17	Difficulties in pronunciation
From 18-21	Lack of confidence

### CHAPTER 5 EXPECTED OUTCOME

This research is expected to find out the problems of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University in speaking English. These problems can be related to linguistic issues (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar), lack of confidence and other issues. These research results can help the students recognize some common problems in speaking. In addition, the research is also expected to find out some suitable ways for the students to deal with those problems. They are some ways to improve pronunciation, ways to increase vocabulary and ways to learn grammar, etc. The research also expects the students to apply these solutions to improve their speaking ability. Moreover, through this research, students can be aware of the importance of speaking English, and focus more on learning speaking. Furthermore, it is also expected that the teacher can understand these difficulties in speaking English, so that they can find out suitable ways to help their students overcome these problems.

#### REFERENCES

1. **Brown and Yule (1983)**. Teaching the spoken language, Cambridge University Press.

2. **Brazil, D, Courtyard, M, & Johns, C (1980).** Discourse, intonation and language teaching. London: Longman
3. **Chaney, A.L., and T.L. Burk. (1998).** Teaching Oral Communication in Grades K-8. Boston: Allyn&Bacon
4. **Chastain, K. (1976).** Developing Second Language Skills. Theory to Practice Third Edition. New York: McNally College
5. **Chen (1983).** Structures and function of English Intonation. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Teaching Press
6. **Chen (1983:143).** A Study of pronunciation of English Learners in China. By Fachun Zhang (Vol.5 N.6)
7. **Gerald Gillis (2013).** The importance of speaking skill. Retrieved from the internet: <http://www.geraldgillis.com/importance-speaking-skill>. Visited on April 2021
8. **Hornby, A. S. (1974).** Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. Oxford: Oxford Dictionary Press
9. **John Sinclair (2007).** Collins Cobuild English for Advanced Learner
10. **James, D.W. (2005:2).** The Teacher's Grammar Book. America: Soka University
11. **Kostanin (2010).** Thought and Language, Prentice Hall
12. **Lightbown, P. & Spada, N. (2006, p.39).** How Languages Are Learned. (3rd ed) Oxford: Oxford
13. **Luoma, S. (2004).** Assessing speaking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
14. **Longman (2003).** Longman dictionary of temporary English new edition. Summer: Della
15. **Oxford Pocket dictionaries of Current English 2009**
16. **Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994).** How to be a more successful language learner. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers
17. **Thomson, R. &. (1994).** Understanding the Courses, We Teach: Local Perspectives on English Language Teaching. University of Michigan Press.
18. **Ur (1996).** Developing speaking skill through Reading (Vol 2). Canadian Center of Science and Education.

