

WHY HUBT'S ENGLISH MAJOR THIRD YEAR STUDENTS FAIL TO SPEAK ENGLISH NATURALLY, CORRECTLY AND CONFIDENTLY AFTER GETTING TWO-YEAR EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article is written to find out and understand the difficulties HUBT's English major third-year students face in English speaking skill and make some possible suggestions for them to improve it inside and outside the classroom through three different questions about vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar separately.

Keywords: English speaking skill, difficulties, solutions.

1. Introduction

English is the language of science, technology and global communication, plays a vital role in developing the status of a country. Along with its importance as an international language, it also provides us distilled essence of advance and up-to-date knowledge in all fields of human developments and activities and even job opportunities.

For English major students at Hanoi University of Business and Technology (HUBT), English is taught from the first to fourth year education but not every student is able to communicate and use this language properly. To find out the problems related to the English language Speaking skill, we must sort out the problems and then solutions to deal with them accordingly.

This present article faces issues that HUBT's undergraduate level students have in speaking English at learning and living places. The aims of this study are to investigate the causes of the factors that

become the third-year students' obstacles when speaking English and suggest some possible solutions for them to overcome.

2. Overview

2.1. Language Skills

It is a common convention that a language is acquired, learned and then used in a society by human beings. A child who is new-born acquires a communicative competence with a given language in a speech community; Consequently, he learns and uses the language in the mentioned area. Therefore, a language is not only genetically transmitted but also socio-culturally acquired and/or learned.

Sapir (1921, p.8) has given "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols." Allen (1974) has also written "Language is a means of communicating thoughts and social control. Language is a social activity rather than as a means of individual self-expression."

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A language is used as a means of communication. With languages, human beings can express their ideas and wishes to other people such as when they need the others' help, they are able to say "Can you give me a hand?" in English or "你可以帮我?" in Chinese.

Additionally, Bloch and Trager (1942, p.5) have also represented as follows: "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates". Besides, Hall (1968, p. 158) has stated that "... the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols".

A language is arbitrary because of the shortage of a natural relationship between the signifier and the signified. For instance, the english word *library* and chinese word 图书馆 bear no inherent relationship with the place which contains books and other information.

Since it is a language that is said to be a system, it must be systematic naturally. The systematicness of a language can be considered through the following example, if we see a language as being formed from sounds, we will figure out only certain sounds occur in any one language that occur in specifically regular and predictable patterns. For instance, in English, a speaker can say "We go to school to learn English" instead of "Go we to school to learn English". Or that person is able to make the sentence "我们去学校学习英语" instead of "去我们学校学习英语". Also, the idea of systematicness of language as it is found in the arrangement of words implies the idea of predictability. For instance, in English "We are studying English in the classroom", and the sentence with the

similar meaning in Chinese as "我们在教室学习英语".

In order to understand easily, correctly and thoroughly about four skills in a language, Figure 1 is formed as follows:

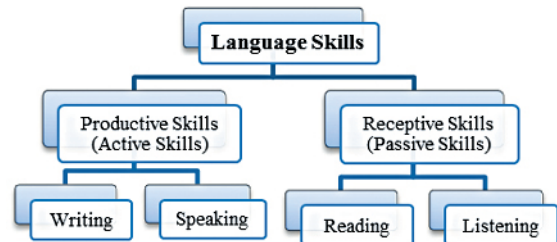


Figure 1. Classification of Language Skills

2.2. Speaking Skill

Each skill has its own important and necessary role in language skills, nevertheless, in this paper, the researcher pays all attention to speaking skill. And to get more accurate knowledge, the definitions are unavoidable to be explored.

There have a lot of definitions of speaking skill proposed by some popular language experts. Firstly, it should be Siahaan (2008:95) who has mentioned as "Speaking is a productive language skill". Furthermore, it comes to the definition of Fulcher (2003:23), "Speaking is the use of language to communicate with other".

Besides, Chaney, A. L., & Burk, T. L. (1998, p. 13) has given that speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". To get this theory right, it is advisable to have a look at what verbal, non-verbal communications and contexts are. Verbal communication is about language, both written and spoken.

In more details, the development of skills and etiquette in conversations is an important part of socialisation in which

contexts play an extremely essential and important role in receiving and processing information in correct ways to have the best results of conversations as being stated in 1994 by Brown and in 1997 by Burns, A. and Joyce, H. that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information.

2.3. Factors

There are several factors which affect student's performance in speaking English fluently and appropriately. The first factor is that their amount of English vocabulary for class and daily conversations is not enough. The second aspect is about students' pronunciation. In the first year, despite being taught about IPA and practicing a lot, many students still make mistakes in pronouncing the letter "θ", "ð", "tʃ", "dʒ",.... The last cause is of English grammar. With the system of learning from the most basic to the hardest, students have been studying English letters, words, phrases, simple, compound and complex sentences, essays,... However, the mistakes often occur when students are asked to make complex sentences because they are confused with too many subordinating conjunctions/linkers.

2.4. Findings and solutions

a) Findings

To thoroughly understand the real situations of English major third year students of HUBT when it comes to English speaking skill, the questionnaire involves three different questions about vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar separately has been implemented on 40 third year students who major in English via the Internet and the gathered results are unbelievable.

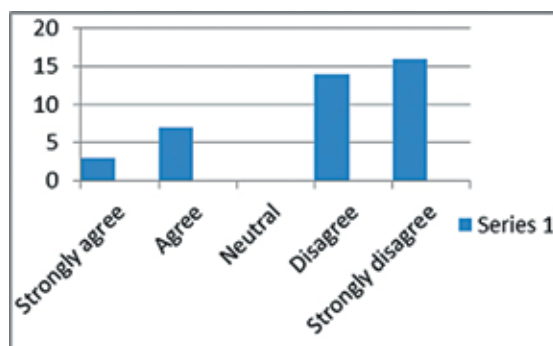
From the mentioned questions, the frequency distribution clearly shows that 30 of 40 HUBT's English major students in third year are facing the problem due to lack of limited vocabulary, 31 are facing the same because of poor pronunciation and 30 of the population are facing oral fluency problems due to the anxiety of English grammar.

In fact, whenever these students are given some verbal tasks in groups, they just start talking in their mother tongue (Vietnamese). Although they may want to express their ideas orally in English, they find themselves unable to do it. The major reason behind all this is that they do not have proper knowledge of a target language.

After collecting the information, the results are given below along with discussion.

Is your English vocabulary enough for class and daily conversations?

Figure 2. The lack of vocabulary

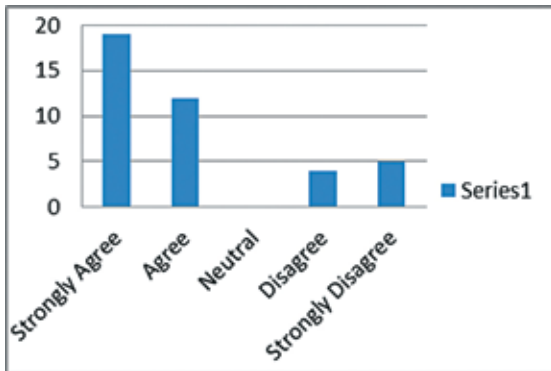


The result of above figure tells that students are facing vocabulary issues. The 30 out of 40 students have the obstacle to speak English naturally, correctly and fluently. This problem does not enable them to express and to convey their ideas by speaking and even to understand what others said. This confirms the common conventions that vocabulary is the basic for speaking or conversation skill because the more words someone knows, the more he/

she can say and understand. That is why most students are not able to speak English.

Is it difficult to pronounce English words?

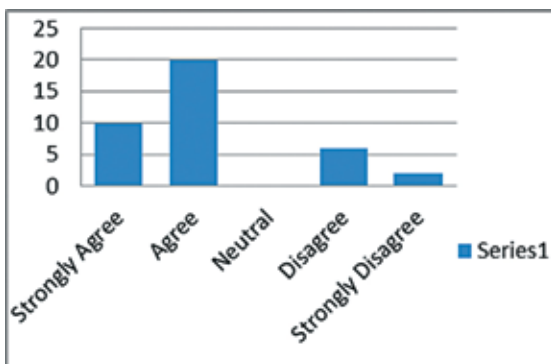
Figure 3. The difficulty of pronunciation



The result of above figure reveals that students are meeting the issue of pronunciation (31 out of 40 students are not good at pronouncing some English words). The truth is the investigated students are too lazy to practicing pronouncing words at classrooms when being requested to train by the teacher or they just try to obey the teacher's order as if they are doing that for their teacher's future, not for theirs. This happens times to times, that is why students are poor at uttering the words and the problem is worse when they are asked to make long sentences with more words. Because of students' laziness and with regard to incorrect pronunciation, students feel that this kind of obstacle makes them afraid to speak and find it difficult to pronounce English words.

Is it difficult for you to express complex ideas in English language?

Figure 4. The problem of grammar



The result of above figure reports that students are having syntax problems. They do not know how to build complex ideas in English language because of the lack of basic knowledge of English grammar. In fact, they used to be hard-working in the first year, but they could not keep that learning spirit, instead they spent their time in vain by using social networking sites too much and often, thinking about ways to earn money by working a part-time job without paying attention to study... The basic knowledge of parts of speech, articles, active and passive voices... plays a very important role in learning English grammar. Like building four- storey buildings, if the ground floor is not stable or hard enough, it can be a disaster for building the second, third or fourth one. Students those do not have the basics can hardly get intermediate and advanced grammar knowledge; this is a common understanding.

b) Solutions

Third year students are going to graduate from university soon, so it is very essential for them to have confidence and appropriate methods in speaking English. This matter cannot be solved in an efficient and complete way without the participation of teachers and students.

Due to the limit of ability and time, the researcher has just mentioned some feasibly useful and adequate solutions.

- For teachers:

There are various possible approaches for teachers to use in order to improve their students' English-speaking skill at classrooms as follows:

At first, it will be much difficult to control your class well if you don't know your students' names. For instance, in English speaking lessons, if a student is

speaking in Vietnamese, you need to be able to quickly say, “Thang - are you speaking English?” This should be said in a harmonious, friendly tone, not in an angry one and with a smile on the face of the teacher.

Next, for work-in-part tasks at classrooms, have the students choose partners, sit facing a partner and tell them to talk about the given familiar topics in a limited time. Also, tell them the rule that they absolutely must not speak any Vietnamese during this time! This free conversation at the beginning of class plays an important role in encouraging, helping students become more familiar with daily and basic English conversations and more confident in speaking English naturally, correctly and fluently.

Then, this cannot be without in free conversations. It can be difficult because of the various numbers of desks and chairs in the room, so teachers should arrange the class in an appropriate way, even standing to talk. In addition, sitting face to face affords direct eye contact which somehow improves communication in English.

Another advantage of this arrangement is that it allows for a very easy and fair way to change partners. Students simply stand up and move in a clockwise direction to get to the position facing a new partner.

After that, students will find it much easier to talk about something that they know a lot about and this forms confidence. They do not need to read or search for the ideas of new topics, instead they just need to sort out the contents in minds and then make sentences in English.

Moreover, running out of ideas when speaking is a common phenomenon in English speaking lessons at Vietnamese classrooms, so the role of teachers is

highlight to suggest students with ideas or cues. Drawing a diagram in the middle of the board might be an efficient solution to deal with this type of problem. The best way to describe it is like a mind-map that allows students to see influences, likes, dislikes... and then give them the necessary cues to speak about their topics.

For the lack of English vocabulary of students, the teachers should pay attention to encourage students to read, look up in a dictionary and ask them to memorize some words, or the teachers can use some other possible solutions like suggesting learning websites, for instance, www.UsingEnglish.com, useful games, easy songs as homework for their students to practice memorizing words in English.

With regard to overcome incorrect pronunciation, it is said that by watching English movies and listening English songs, students can listen and repeat what they have just heard. Some other solutions could be the solutions of incorrect pronunciation, for example, listening to English news, talking to English native speakers. At classroom, It is virtually impossible for students to produce the right sounds for English words when they cannot hear and distinguish those sounds from one another first. Rather than depending on spelling, it is used to transcribe the exact sounds in English words. Students who know the phonetic alphabet and whose teachers use it get additional input when they are learning the correct pronunciation of words. They not only hear the correct pronunciation, but they see it, too. Phonetic transcriptions on the website <https://busyteacher.org/14764-how-to-introduce-phonetic-alphabet-schwa-ipa.html> show students exactly how an English word is supposed

to sound. When teachers teach English words in groups that point out differences as well as similarities, the students will be able to hear the differences and then produce the differences that distinguish words from one another. For correct pronunciation, students will have to hold their mouth properly. Additionally, some students will not be able to produce a sound simply because they can hear and identify it. Once teachers let their students look at their mouths as they pronounce certain words and sounds, have them look at their own mouths. This can be done easily with mirrors or with the reverse camera on most smart-phones. Also, teachers should have their students copy the speech of newscasters, actors, and English speakers, when they do, they will ingrain correct pronunciation and intonation into their own spoken English. And, taking the time to record students reading the same English passage at the beginning of the school year, in the middle, and again at the end before the mid-term and term tests. When teachers record their students' pronunciation, they can play the tapes one after another to show their students' progress. This is important for increasing the student's confidence and bolstering their self-esteem.

Teachers should draw their students' attention on grammar and teach students about syntax from the most basic to the highest after lessons because there always has grammar in basic English. A lot of people think that grammar is not related to speaking skill, it is just an obstacle needs to avoid. This opinion is partly true only! In my opinion, every language is formed with 2 features which are vocabulary and grammar. In other words, like construction profession,

vocabulary is considered as bricks and grammar as mortar, you can build an unstable wall with bricks only, without mortar, but it is not hard enough and can be collapsed by relatively strong wind.

- *For students:*

Students should be more active to learn and practice speaking English in order to get the best performance. It is necessary for students to know, understand and use English classroom language. The lessons can be started more efficiently with some useful phrases at the beginning such as "*Good morning!*", "*How are you, today?*", "*Can we start now?*", "*Do exercise 10 on page 23 for your homework*". The instructions by the teachers are not understandable and the tasks cannot be completed rightly and fully if students' range of classroom vocabulary is not enough, this may lead to more explanations and waste of time and efforts – It is the first step that counts.

To learn English vocabulary after school, here are some suggestions: Firstly, students should choose to read books in English that they have already read in their native language or those that have been made into films which they have seen. This will make it easier for them to understand the plot and the content. Secondly, when students listen to songs in English, it is advisable for them to pay attention to the lyrics and at the same time look up the lyrics on the internet to better understand the words.

Also, students may choose an English language magazine, a blog, or a newspaper that interests them and read it frequently; Next, watching English language movies on DVD either with subtitles in English or without any subtitles online or offline is always one of the most saving and useful

ways for students to think about, especially with the 4.0 technology industry.

In the free time, going outside to some tourism attractions is one of the best ways to learn English vocabulary and conversations by making friends with native speakers and ask them to help students practice using the learned words and students can also learn by listening to native speakers.

Additionally, in my experience before students learn how to speak, they will need to learn how to listen. They can listen from movies, songs and music and podcasts or also find listening exercises online, such as the pronunciation exercises from <https://www.rong-chang.com/mjc/pronunciation/index.htm> or except for pronunciation exercises, they can watch videos on <https://www.fluentu.com/english/>. These activities are useful if being used in an appropriate way.

Also, the position of the mouth plays a very important role in pronouncing English words correctly. When students speak, they have to move their mouths, this is unavoidable. So, how they move their mouths will affect how they pronounce English words. Here are some possibly efficient ways for students to apply in practicing at home: The first step to correcting the mouth shape is to notice it and pay attention. The simplest way to tell what your mouth is doing while you talk is using a mirror. Or, put a finger in front of student's lips (like they are about to say "shh") and as speaking, students don't move their fingers. This way can help students feel their lips moving away from or pushing against their fingers. Moreover, watching other people and notice the shape their mouths and lips make when they are talking is an extremely useful and

quick way to learn English pronunciation, those people may be the MC of favorite TV show or movie, teachers, native speakers,... on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbO6vGBkx48> with no fee.

To practice, students can check out <https://www.howmanysyllables.com/howtountsyllables>. This website shows students the syllables in any word they look up, and even shows them how to pronounce it and their work is just to mimic and learn only.

To train more, they can choose to listen to English dictations online from elementary, intermediate or advanced on the website <https://www.englishclub.com/listening/dictation.htm>. And, there are some excellent video, podcasts and audio guides on English pronunciations that students can use to improve, for instance, some learning materials on <https://www.youtube.com/user/EngLanguageClub/videos>, <https://www.youtube.com/user/rachelsenglish> or <https://pronuncian.com/podcasts>.

One way to tell if students' practice is working is to record themselves with a camera. Use a camera and don't just a sound recorder because it's important to see how students speak, not only hear it.

If students don't speak often, they can become nervous when it's finally time to open their mouths and say something in English. Not only do they need English pronunciation practice, but they need to get over their nerves so that they feel comfortable when speaking in front of others.

And all the solutions above can be done simply when students are cooking meals, getting ready for bed or even relaxing, so everything is not too difficult to be applied.

To deal with the problem of making complex sentences or grammatical problems, students must stay focused on the basic grammar before getting the knowledge of higher ones. In every elementary or intermediate level books, there always have a lot of grammar or functions stick to vocabulary and other language skills, and if paying attention to it early enough, students can be more familiar and natural with English grammar and find it easier to apply when they are speaking.

It's true that when students are speaking, there's really no time to think about grammar rules and to analyze the sentence by thinking. A lot of students just study and study and read and read lots of lessons on the present perfect tense, for example, but they never try to make their own examples. So, they might understand the present perfect tense in theory, or recognize the present perfect when they read it, but they haven't practiced creating or producing the present perfect. Therefore, the first step is to consciously and deliberately practice the grammar. The same thing is possible for the students in English – they just need to do the conscious and deliberate practice in order to get those patterns into their minds, and then it'll come out naturally in English, too!

5. Conclusion

The results are clearly indicated that students are failed to speak English, even getting three-year education. They are facing English speaking problem including lack of vocabulary, pronunciations, grammar, confidence, practice, etc. This study investigates factors that become students' obstacle to speak English.

In addition, this study is also focused on finding out some causes and solutions of the obstacle.

Overall, it can be concluded that, most students believed that the lack of practice was the main factor causing an obstacle for them to speak English to turn to the possible solutions to overcome their problem in speaking English, this article suggests more exercises or activities that can develop their vocabulary and speaking skills are worth considering.

This shows that teacher should be more aware of their students' obstacles and reluctance to speak English. To help students gain more knowledge of other linguistics aspects such as grammar and correct pronunciation. This way is expectedly contributed to the development of the students' speaking in English to help them become more confident, accurate and successful in English-speaking skill inside and outside classroom./.

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TẠI SAO SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ 3 CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH CỦA TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC KINH DOANH VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HÀ NỘI KHÔNG THỂ NÓI TIẾNG ANH MỘT CÁCH TỰ NHIÊN, CHÍNH XÁC VÀ TỰ TIN SAU HAI NĂM HỌC TẬP.

Nguyễn Đức Long

Tóm tắt: Bài nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm hiểu những khó khăn của sinh viên năm thứ ba chuyên ngành tiếng Anh của Trường Đại học Kinh Doanh và Công Nghệ Hà Nội đối với kỹ năng nói và gợi ý các giải pháp phù hợp giúp sinh viên có thể cải thiện được khả năng nói tiếng Anh trong lớp và ngoài lớp học thông qua ba câu hỏi khác nhau về từ vựng, ngữ âm và ngữ pháp.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh, khó khăn, giải pháp.