

Strategies for Enhancing the Speaking Skills of University of Phan Thiet Tourism Faculty Students

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Abstract: *Effective communication skills, particularly English speaking abilities, are crucial for tourism students preparing to enter the workforce. However, many students at the University of Phan Thiet's Tourism Faculty struggle with confidence and proficiency in spoken English. This study investigated various strategies for improving the English speaking skills of these students. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, including survey and interview. The findings indicate that a combination of interactive speaking activities, regular practice, multimedia sources, feedback and guidance from instructors, language learning apps and software, industry-specific practice, pronunciation exercises, vocabulary development, and grammar mastery into the currctice can significantly boost students' speaking abilities and self-assurance. By implementing these targeted strategies, the University of Phan Thiet can better equip its tourism students with the essential communication skills needed for success in the hospitality industry.*

Keywords: *Speaking skills, tourism student, University of Phan Thiet*

1. Introduction

Effective verbal communication in English is essential for students preparing to enter the tourism and hospitality industry, as they will be required to engage with a diverse array of international clients and partners on a daily basis. However, many tourism students at the University of Phan Thiet struggle to develop the necessary proficiency and confidence in spoken English, posing a significant challenge as they prepare for their future careers. This study aims to investigate practical, evidence-based strategies for enhancing the English speaking skills of University of Phan Thiet tourism students. By employing a mixed-methods approach, including survey and interview, the researchers seek to identify teaching methods that can be implemented to improve students' speaking abilities and self-assurance, ultimately equipping them with the critical communication skills needed to excel in the global tourism marketplace.

2. Literature review

Speaking is an interactive process involving the production, reception, and processing of information to facilitate communication and create meaning (Torky, 2006; Abidova et al., 2020). Speaking skills encompass not only linguistic abilities, but also the capacity for meaningful discussion, emotional expression, and cultural adaptation. Research indicates that speaking proficiency is closely linked to student travel experiences, as clear and effective spoken

communication is crucial in the tourism industry for the smooth operation of travel services (Saragih et al., 2022).

Students' speaking abilities are influenced by various factors, including topical knowledge, motivation, teacher feedback, confidence, performance pressure, and preparation time (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Effective speaking requires proficiency in five key aspects: vocabulary, grammar, fluency, comprehension, and pronunciation (Brown, 2004; Ahyak & Indramawan, 2013). In this study, the authors analyzes students' speaking skills based on these six factors: vocabulary, grammar, fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and confidence.

University students often struggle to master English speaking due to various challenges. Ur (2000) identified four key factors: inhibition (fear of making mistakes), lack of ideas, low involvement, and tendency to use their native language. Additionally, Cao et al. (2021) found that insufficient vocabulary and lexical knowledge is a major contributor to poor English fluency. In summary, the main reasons for students' weak speaking skills include psychological barriers, limited ideation, low participation, first language interference, and insufficient linguistic competence.

According to Saragih et al. (2022), speaking ability is crucial for tourism students, as it supports smooth service delivery. Effective communication, including

proper pronunciation, fluency, and tone, plays a significant role in their tourism success.

At the University of Phan Thiet, the tourism management program emphasizes developing students' English language competencies through general English courses, specialized business and tourism English classes. The university aims to produce graduates equipped with strong English and other essential skills to thrive in Vietnam's dynamic tourism industry.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate strategies for enhancing the speaking skills of tourism faculty students at the University of Phan Thiet. Quantitative data was collected through a survey administered to a sample of 170 tourism students. The survey instrument included questions to assess students' self-perceived English speaking proficiency, their challenges and barriers in developing speaking skills, and their preferences for different teaching and learning approaches. Demographic information such as year of study and English language background was also gathered. To supplement the survey data, qualitative insights were obtained through interviews with 10 students. In-depth interviews were conducted to gain more information from students and clarify the factors that influence their speaking skills.

4. Results

4.1. Student Survey Results

The majority of Phan Thiet University's tourism students experience significant difficulties speaking English, as the accompanying data demonstrates. The most notable factor is the limited vocabulary, with the highest level shown by the longest bar in the chart. In addition, students also have a poor grasp of grammar and have problems with pronunciation. Factors such as lack of grammar proficiency, lack of confidence and lack of ideas are also challenges but at a lower level. To improve students' English speaking skills, solutions need to focus on improving vocabulary, consolidating grammar knowledge and practicing pronunciation skills. Measures to support students to be more confident in communicating in English will also be necessary.



Figure 2. Factors Affecting English Speaking Skill

Source: Research authors

The survey results highlight participants' views on factors influencing English speaking skills in tourism, arranged by their significance. A notable 86.47% agree that a diverse vocabulary is key for easily constructing speaking content. Following closely, 84.71% consider regular practice crucial for skill enhancement. Additionally, 81.23% value multimedia resources, such as videos and podcasts, for improving speaking abilities. The integration of pronunciation exercises is supported by 81.18% of participants. Practicing tourism-related scenarios boosts communication confidence, with 79.42% in agreement. Furthermore, 80.59% emphasize the importance of instructor feedback in skill development, while 76.05% find language learning apps beneficial. Finally, 69.00% support interactive activities like role plays, indicating a need for increased focus on these methods. Overall, these factors—vocabulary, regular practice, multimedia resources, pronunciation exercises, instructor feedback, and interactive activities—are vital for enhancing English speaking skills.

4.2. Interview

After surveying the factors affecting English speaking skills, the author interviewed several students to gather more information. The students shared many interesting perspectives. They emphasized that regular practice, even for just 30 minutes each day, is crucial for improvement. Participating in group activities enhances communication skills in real-life contexts and makes learning more enjoyable. Many students also highly value language learning apps

like Duolingo and Babbel, as they effectively support pronunciation and vocabulary practice. Furthermore, exposure to English through movies, music, and books helps them learn vocabulary and grammar naturally. They noted that learning and memorizing common phrases boosts their confidence when using English. Additionally, taking notes and reviewing knowledge, along with receiving feedback from teachers, plays an important role in their learning process. Finally, being confident and unafraid of making mistakes is essential for improving communication skills.

5. Discussion and Implications

Consistent and continuous practice is crucial for developing strong English speaking abilities. Regular practice, even for just 30 minutes a day, is essential for mastering the language.

Participating in interactive group activities, such as discussions, debates, and collaborative projects, provides invaluable opportunities for students to put their English communication skills to use in real-life contexts.

The use of language learning apps can be highly effective in targeted practice of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

Exposure to authentic English-language media, such as movies, music, books, and podcasts, can greatly benefit students' speaking skills.

Incorporating structured learning strategies, such as memorizing communication phrases, taking notes on new grammar and vocabulary, and systematically reviewing knowledge, can provide invaluable insights to help students identify areas for improvement and refine their speaking skills.

Cultivating confidence and a willingness to take risks when practicing English is critical. Students who approach language learning with a positive, resilient mindset and embrace errors as learning opportunities are better able to continuously expand their speaking abilities and engage in authentic, spontaneous communication.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings emphasize the effectiveness of various methods for improving the speaking skills of second-year students in the Faculty of Tourism at the University of Phan Thiet. By incorporating interactive speaking activities, regular practice, multimedia sources, feedback and guidance from instructors, language learning apps and software, industry-specific practice, pronunciation exercises, vocabulary development, and grammar

mastery, educators can effectively support students in their journey towards becoming confident and proficient speakers of English in the context of the tourism industry.

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