

An Investigation into the Difficulties in English Speaking Skills encountered by English majored Sophomores at Tay Do University

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Abstract: In the current era of strong foreign language development, English is present at all educational levels in our country. Regretfully, students majoring in English often struggle with speaking the language. Therefore, to identify some common factors that these English majors have encountered that are causing difficulties in speaking, the research project “An Investigation into the Difficulties in English Speaking Skills encountered by English majored Sophomores at Tay Do University” was conducted. 60 sophomores majoring in English from Tay Do University’s English classes 17A and 17B are the participants in this study. The questionnaire and the interview were employed as two primary research instruments to analyze the data amassed. This is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The results of this study were analyzed to point out the factors affecting participants’ difficulties in problems in terms of Linguistic factors (Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation), Psychological factors (Anxiety, Lack of Self-Confidence, Lack of motivation, Practice environment) and Background knowledge.

Keywords: Difficulties, English speaking skills, English-majored students.

1. Introduction

English is taught in more than 118 countries and is currently the third most spoken language in the world. Thus, “English as a global language” is a term coined by David Crystal in 1997 (House, 1999).

Speaking is one of the reflective skills that enables students to verbally communicate with listeners while expressing their ideas, desires, and feelings, according to Bygate M. (1987). Speaking is very important to Vietnamese students majoring in English in general and English language students at Tay Do University in particular, because they expect to use it frequently for work, communication, etc. However, some learners at Tay Do University frequently run into some challenges when attempting to communicate or practice speaking English in class.

As a result, the researcher’s main concerns and the reason for conducting the research paper are the aforementioned issues. The research project is titled “An Investigation into the Difficulties in English Speaking Skills encountered by English majored Sophomores at Tay Do University”. It is anticipated that this research will offer an overview of speaking difficulties, assisting educators and learners in

identifying appropriate and practical ways to enhance students’ speaking abilities.

2. Research content

The purpose of the research was to investigate the following question: *What are the difficulties in English Speaking Skills encountered by English majored Sophomores at Tay Do University?*

In this research, the questionnaire and interview paper are 2 main instruments. The questionnaire is used to collect background information and survey the cause of obstacles in students’ English-speaking ability. Furthermore, the interview paper is also designed to get detailed information about students’ and teachers’ problems. By using 2 research instruments, the challenges that students face in learning to speak can be revealed feasibly. 60 Sophomores majoring in English Course 17 (2022–2025) at Tay Do University participated in the study. There were 44 females and 16 males between the ages of 19 and 23. They all speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue, and English is considered a foreign language. Most of them have been studying English for between 8–15 years. After collecting data from the questionnaire, the researcher invited 3

teachers who taught English Speaking, as well as 15 students at random, to participate in an interview to ensure the research’s precision and objectivity. As a result, this thesis was based on both quantitative and qualitative research.

3. Result: After collecting data, the data from the questionnaires were analyzed thanks to Excel version 2016. Data from interviews is mainly interpreted using qualitative analysis methods. All collected data will be aggregated and calculated.

3.1. Students’ backgrounds: Students’ learning processes have been greatly impacted by their living environments; especially for those who majored in English. As a result, being more aware of students’ living spaces is a necessary section. The percentage of student’s living environment in English course 17 is shown in the pie chart below.

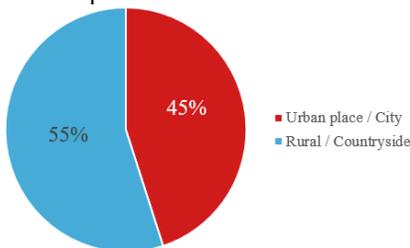


Figure 2.1. Students’ living environment

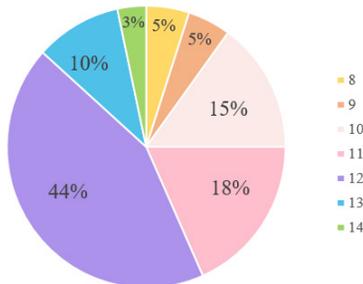


Figure 2.2. Students’ years learning English

Chart 2.1 indicates that of the sophomores in Tay Do University’s English course 17, 55% (33/60) were from the countryside and only 45% (27/60) were from the city. It follows that they were undoubtedly from different backgrounds. Students have varied degrees of experience speaking English. Therefore, when schoolers did not have the opportunity to study in an academic environment, they were likely to face numerous difficulties adjusting. That was the reason for their poor speaking abilities.

Examining the pie chart 2.2, the biggest piece corresponded to 44% (26/60) of the participants who had been learning English for 12 years. It indicates that they have studied this language since 3rd grade

and have 8 years of this language study under their belt before starting university. However, this does not imply they have good speaking skills. Because during those years, in addition to learning English, they were required to take a wide range of other subjects in school; Another significant one came from those studying English for 11 years, accounting for 18% (11/60); In addition, 15% (9/60) of the participants said they had studied English for 10 years; Furthermore, 6 out of 60 students, or 10%, have studied English for 13 years; Surprisingly, 10% of students have studied English for 8 and 9 years, specifically 3/60 (5%) studied for 8 years and 3/60 (5%) studied for 9 years; Finally, only 3% (2/60) of participants have studied English for 14 years, representing the smallest slice of the pie chart.

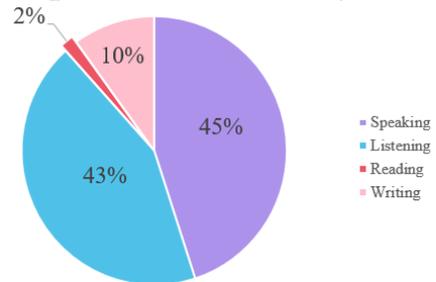


Figure 2.3. The most difficult skill for students

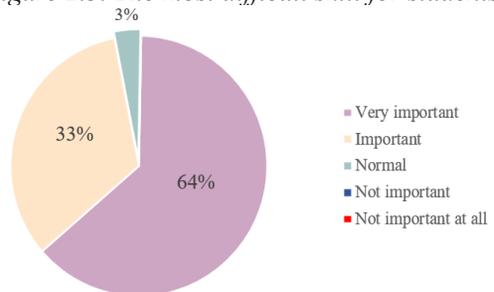


Figure 2.4. The importance of Speaking

Besides listening which takes up the majority, speaking is one of the most difficult skills for English language students. The figure shows that 45% (27/60), the proportion of students, said that Speaking skills were the most difficult. Listening abilities came next, scoring 43% (26/60). Furthermore, 10% (6/60) of students indicated that Reading skills are the most challenging. Finally, only 1/60 participants indicated that Writing skills are the most difficult, making 2% the smallest slice of the pie chart.

Figure 2.4 makes it clear that speaking plays a critical role in the process of learning English. The highest rate of students who stated that English speaking was “Very important” was shown by the

figure, which stands at 64% (38/60). “Important” came next, scoring 33% (20/60). Just 3% (2/60) of participants indicated that they had a “Normal” attitude toward speaking in English, which is a significantly lower percentage than the two previously mentioned. However, no one reported “Not important” or “Not important at all” for the role of English speaking.

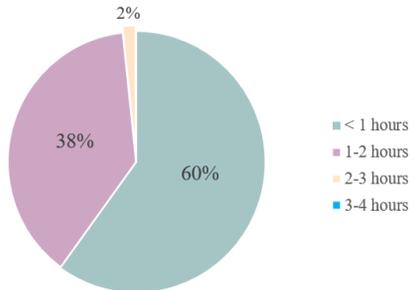


Figure 2.5. Participants' time practice speaking

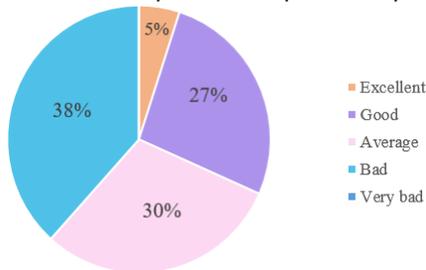


Figure 2.6. Participants evaluate speaking skills

In Figure 2.5, the biggest piece indicated that 60% or 36 out of 60 participants had practiced speaking English in less than 1 hour. The truth is that most English language learners spend little time speaking the language — usually no more than 30 minutes. Another noteworthy one came from 38% (23/60) of the study participants who had practiced speaking English for 1-2 hours. Furthermore, only 2% (1/60) of the sophomore students studied had practiced speaking English in 2-3 hours. Finally, nobody spent 3-4 hours practicing their English.

Figure 2.6 clearly shows that 30% (18/60) of participants had average speaking skills. Furthermore, approximately 27% (16/60) reported that their speaking ability was “Good”. The percentage of 23/60 sophomores who admitted to being “Bad” at speaking was then 38%. Additionally, the lowest percentage of the above figure was 5% (3/60) for “Excellent”. Finally, no one expressed concern that their speaking ability was “Very bad”. Generally, students from English course 17 appeared to be fairly insecure about their speaking abilities.

3.2. Participants' problems with speaking skills.

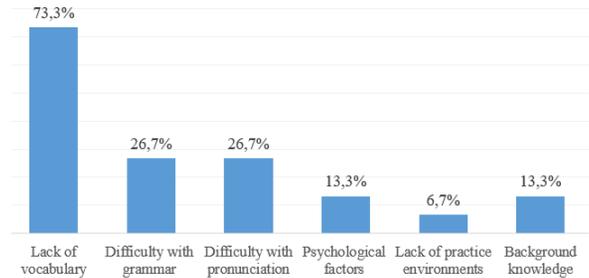


Figure 2.7. Participants' problems when learning Speaking skills

The first issue was that sophomores struggled to learn speaking skills due to the linguistic factor (100%). More specifically, 11/15 (73.3%) selected a lack of vocabulary, the highest percentage in this figure. Difficulty with grammar and pronunciation are both equal at 26.7% (4/15). Similarly, 2 out of 15 (13.3%) sophomores identified a psychological factor as one of the challenges in learning to speak and they also mentioned that they don't know what to say because they have no idea, equivalent to 13.3% (2/15). The issue of a lack of practice environments was addressed in the final column of Figure 2.7.

4. Discussion: Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews, the researcher would like to draw two conclusions. The first is for participants to recognize their difficulties in learning and applying speaking skills. These problems include Linguistic factors (Vocabulary, Grammar, Pronunciation), Psychological factors (Anxiety, Lack of Self-Confidence, Lack of motivation, Practice environment), and Background knowledge. To assist second-year students in overcoming challenges. It is also hoped that this study will help teachers look at their students' problems with greater insight. As a result, they could research effective teaching methods or provide more suitable materials for students.

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