COMMON DIFFICULTIES IN SPEAKING OF ENGLISH-MAJORED FRESHMEN AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

Phan Thi Minh Uyen[i]**,**
Phan Thi Dieu
Faculty of Foreign Language,
Tay Do University,
Vietnam

Abstract:
It is said that English speaking plays a crucial role in this modern society. Nowadays, more and more non-native English people have studied English speaking for a better future in working. However, this skill is a big challenge for those who want to master it, particularly for English-majored students. For this reason, the research is conducted to figure out some difficulties that first-year students have faced in English speaking. Accordingly, the participants of this research are English-majored freshmen coming from course 15 at Tay Do University. The questionnaire and the interview are the two main research instruments that are used to collect information. The findings could point out some difficulties in speaking experienced by English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University.

Keywords: common difficulties, English speaking, English-majored freshmen

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

The English language has become increasingly significant in recent decades. This global language is currently widely recognized as the principal language of intercommunication, science, and technology, in addition to nations' national languages widely employed in parts of life. Moreover, the English language has become an essential factor in strengthening trade and travel in many countries. There is an increasing necessity of knowing and using this communication through modern technology and media communication devices such as mobile telephones, electronic mail, and the Internet. People, from children to adults, learn English for different purposes such as to pass the exams, to study abroad, or to find a good job in the future, to communicate with

---

[i] Correspondence: email ptmuyen@tdu.edu.vn, smile14478@gmail.com

foreigners or, to do business. Undoubtedly, people around the world need this language as the main means of their communication.

As a result, speaking is a vital skill for individuals learning English, because people cannot interact with each other without first understanding each other. By speaking, speakers do not mean only uttering words through the mouth which means conveying the message through words utterance. They learn to speak their mother tongue just by listening and repeating in a similar manner, a foreign language is learned by imitation and reproduction. Richards (2008) stated *"when people meet, they exchange greetings, engage in small talk, recount comfortable zone of interaction with others"* and *"the ability to speak is considered as a passport to success"* quoted from Spoken English (2009). This implies that speaking fluently or being skilled at speaking is a basic part of humans' ability to stay linked to recent experiences, and so on, in order to be sociable and build connections with others.

Speaking skill is the one that can satisfy the principal function of a language, serving for communication; therefore, a person who can speak English well will certainly find it easy to master English in general. Unfortunately, to those who study English as a non-native language, speaking is regarded as the most difficult competence among the four main skills of English including speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Many English learners in Vietnam also realize that it is much more difficult to communicate English fluently and automatically in the classroom. Particularly at Tay Do University, there is a fact that English- majored students especially first-year have poor English-speaking skills. They spend a lot of time learning grammar, writing, reading and seem to ignore speaking when being high school students. That is why most of the English-majored freshmen are passive in their speaking performance. Although first-year students majoring in English at Tay Do University have more chances to get involved in English speaking environment by learning with foreign teachers, they have encountered specific difficulties in their speaking performance. Obviously, it is the right time that they choose the appropriate learning methods to solve the problem. This study will explore some problems in learning English speaking of the first-year English-majored students.

The researcher decided to conduct the study *"Common Difficulties in Speaking of English-Majored Freshmen at Tay Do University"* for the reasons stated above. The purpose of the research is to help students identify their challenges they have had with English speaking in order to adapt their English learning style.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify some of the difficulties that freshmen majoring in English at Tay Do University have encountered when speaking. Students will benefit from the study's findings since they could enable students to recognize their own challenges. Since then, they have been able to discover several English-speaking techniques that are valuable to their learning.

1.3 The Organization of the Study

The research contains five main following chapters:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction
- Chapter 2 - Literature review
- Chapter 3 - Research aims - research question - hypothesis
- Chapter 4 - Research methodology
- Chapter 5 - Expected outcome

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Speaking

According to Burns and Joyce (1997), speaking is an active process of constructing meaning that comprises the production, reception, and processing of data. Its shape and meaning are determined by the context in which it happens, which includes the speaker, their collective experience, the physical environments, and the speech's purpose. In recent years, linguists have found it easier to *"see what is happening in words"* thanks to the availability of linguistic resources - a computer database that contains *"real-life"* examples of both spoken and written English. The English speaking and written Longman Grammar (1999) is an English grammar reference based on a large-scale corpus.

It is said that a good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speaking topic. Another definition of speaking is that speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth. To speak, we create sounds using many parts of our body, including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal cords, tongue, teeth, and lips. Speaking includes formal and informal forms. That is, informal speaking is typically used with family and friends, or people you know properly whereas another occurs in business or academic situations, or when meeting people for the first time. Brown (1994) also shares the opinion that speaking ability is integrated closely with writing, reading, and listening. So, in language teaching, it is of great importance to emphasize the interrelationship of skill.

As a result, it is critical to highlight the link between skills while teaching a language. From the above definitions, it can be inferred that speaking is expressing ideas, opinions, or feelings to others by using words or sounds of articulation to inform, persuade, and entertain which can be learned by using some teaching-learning methodologies.

2.2 The Importance of Speaking

Speaking is the most often utilized language skill in almost all circumstances, and in everyday human life, communication, notably speaking, is seen as a way for individuals to show affection, get information, and establish community connections. There have been several opinions on the relevance of communication skills in various fields.

People, according to Sesnan (1997), always learn to speak before learning their mother tongue. As Rivers (1981) argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and

writing in our communication. Regarding language learning, most researchers agree that speaking is the most important of the four foreign language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Pattison (1992) asserts that when individuals learn a language, they aim to be able to speak that language. In support of this idea, Celce-Murcia (2001) states that *"being able to speak a language is synonymous with knowing the language because speech is the 66 most basic means of communication of human."* Furthermore, speaking can support other language skills and plays an important role in developing a learner's developing language (Gass & Varionis, 1994). For example, it has been shown that speaking can help develop listening skills (Regina, 1997), developing writing (Trachsel & Severino, 2004) as well as develop reading ability (Hilferty, 2005).

Additionally, the ability to communicate effectively provides the speaker with a variety of notable academic and professional advantages. Baker and Westrup (2003) claim that *"a student who can speak English well may have higher education opportunities, find work, and get promoted."* Employers always value the ability to speak well, because it is *"a skill for which people are valued while the first impression is being formed"* (Hedge, 2000).

In conclusion, speaking is seen as one of the most essential skills for a human being, especially English speaking. This is likely to determine the level of any individual's success. Thus, high-education students, more importantly, English-majored students should take advantage of their university time to learn, practice, and improve their English-speaking performance since this could have an influence on their future.

2.3 Common Difficulties in Speaking
2.3.1 Linguistic Factors
2.3.1.1 Vocabulary

A word or a group of words with a definite meaning is referred to as vocabulary. According to Kamil and Hiebert (2005), vocabulary is the understanding of the meanings of words. Additionally, Rubin and Thompson (1994) declare *"vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language"*. Bowen et al (1985) and McCarthy (1990) indicated that vocabulary is the single and biggest component of any language course. The words come in at least two forms; oral and print. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which we know the meanings when we speak or read orally. While print vocabulary consists of those words for which the meaning is known when we write or read silently. The problems of vocabulary occur when someone lacks the vocabulary needed to talk and does not know how to combine the vocabulary into a good sentence. Hedge (2000) says *"the neglect of vocabulary is also surprising in view of the fact that errors of vocabulary are potentially more misleading than those of grammar."* In fact, without having a sufficient vocabulary, people cannot communicate effectively or express their ideas in both oral and written form. Possessing limited lexis is an obstacle for students in learning a language. Khan (2005) once again states that the numbers of students who learn English as a foreign language have difficulties using words and expressions to speak. In addition, Doris and Jessica (2007) also state that in real-life communication, nobody paid much attention to the correct grammar expression, but emphasized the content and how to

reply. Furthermore, the aim of lexical learning includes both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically and properly in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises (McCarthy, 1984). However, in the little time allotted for the conversation, English learners are unlikely to find the appropriate words quickly and properly, resulting in a failed interaction. In oral communication, this is also a prevalent issue for the majority of Vietnamese learners. In short, students should put more attention to vocabulary since this is really an important part of their speaking performance success.

2.3.1.2 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is also a crucial aspect of verbal skills since it helps people understand what is being said in a conversation. Learners who correctly pronounce words attract listeners to communicate more and are more confident than those who do not. The way of speaking the language is called pronunciation which is generally understood and accepted by Redmond and Vrchota (2007). In such a case, learners of English often expect to be able to speak that language like a native speaker. However, they encounter many factors to gain their desire. According to Gilakjani (2012), *"learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, while learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect."* One of the common factors that they find difficult is the pronunciation of another sound system. Learners find that their mother tongue influences their pronunciation of English. Avery and Ehrich (1992) argued that *"the native language affects both the ability to produce English sounds and the ability to hear sounds."* If they cannot hear English well, they are cut off from the conversation with native speakers. Pronunciation is most definitely the first aspect that people can notice in second language learners when they are speaking English. Nation (2009) stated *"when some teachers and students complain about difficulties in speaking; they are often talking about pronunciation."* Pronunciation also plays a very important role in learning a language, as Derwing and Munro (2005) declare that, *"having good pronunciation of the language can help in normal communication, particularly intelligibility"* (cited in Nation & Newton, 2009). That is the reason why learners usually face difficulties in pronunciation.

2.3.1.3 Grammar

Grammar, like pronunciation and vocabulary, is another significant part of linguistics that affects a student's capacity to communicate. That is, grammar provides learners with the knowledge of syntax and semantics helping students to form a correct sentence using in conversation. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines grammar as *"the study of the classes of words, their infections, and their functions and relations in the sentence."* In addition, grammar gives learners the opportunity to manipulate the structure and differentiate the appropriate grammatical forms that suit their context. Richards (2008) states that *"our knowledge of grammar helps us find the appropriate chunks, and the speaker also assists us in this process through intonation and pausing."* As a result, grammatical rules are said to be one of the fundamental aspects of speaking skills. Nevertheless, it is not simple to apply

correct grammatical structures in English speaking. Learners find it difficult to remember all grammatical rules because of their diversity and complexity. Thus, students often worry about using the wrong structures when speaking English. In conversation, if mistakes are made in one's pronunciation, grammar, or words spelling, it will lead to misunderstanding and boredom for others, and even damage their relationship. Additionally, students also get obstacles when making sentences because they usually make unclear sentences since they arrange the wrong sentence order. When learners learn a foreign language, they often make grammatical mistakes because they apply their mother tongue or first language structure to the structure of the foreign language which is different from their native language (Haryanto, 2007). The role of grammar in communication is obvious. Swan (1998) believed that knowing how to build and use certain structures makes it feasible to communicate common types of meaning successfully. Therefore, those learners should understand English language structures accurately to become fluent.

2.3.2 Psychological Factors
2.3.2.1 Confidence

More than half of a million people suffer from low self-esteem. Self-confidence is recognizing that we have the ability to do excellent things and think positively. According to Elliot (1998), the concept of self-confidence relates to self-assuredness in one's personal judgment, ability, power, etc. sometimes manifested excessively. Good self-confidence comes from a focus on self-consciousness. However, one of the most common problems that students meet when communicating is lacking confidence. Being less confident, the speakers feel uncomfortable when they get involved in any conversation, they are prone to talk with the other as their big challenges. When English speakers lack confidence, no one wants to hear or trust the information they give in their presentations. Lack of self-confidence can be made up of several different aspects like guilty feelings, shyness turned inward, unrealistic expectations of perfection, false sense of humility, fear of change or making mistakes, depression, etc. A lack of self-confidence may bring the students into threat of believing they are not going to be excellent English speakers. This lack of self-confidence also becomes a great problem that affects students' speaking performance. It is difficult for students to master English speaking if they are unconfident in their speaking ability. It is commonly understood that students' lack of confidence usually occurs when students realize their conversation partners have not understood them or when they do not understand other speakers. In this situation, they would rather keep silent while others talk showing that the students lack confidence to communicate. In response to this, according to Nunan (1999), students who lack confidence in themselves and their English are vulnerable to communication anxiety. To conclude, lacking confidence is one of the barriers for those who learn English speaking. Learners need to find ways to overcome this psychological problem.

2.3.2.2 Motivation

Dornyei (2015) stated that motivation refers to the efforts learners make to study a foreign language when it comes to English-majored students practicing and improving their speaking skills. Motivation is one of the keys that influence the rate and success of language learning. Norris-Holt (2002) referring to Crookes and Schmidt defines motivation as *"the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language."* Gardner assumed that motivation involved the desire to learn a language, the intensity of effort to achieve this, and attitudes toward learning the language. In this context, it can be understood as the one relating to attitude and vice versa with both having an influence on learning and acquisition. In addition, Zua (2008) further added that motivation is inner energy and that no matter what kinds of motivation the learners possess it will enhance their study interest. Therefore, lack of motivation or de-motivation is likely to significantly affect English learners' speaking learning. Deci and Ryan (1985) used a similar term 'a-motivation', which means *"the relative absence of motivation that is not caused by a lack of initial interest but rather by the individual's experiencing feelings of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the activity."* Based on Dornyei's study in 2015, factors affecting students' motivation can be classified into learner's factors, teacher factors, environmental factors, and teaching and learning conditions. In short, motivation is a crucial component that helps the construction of a successful conversation, and psychological elements have a direct impact on the effectiveness of any communication.

2.3.3 Background Knowledge

For English majors, background knowledge is also a problem while learning and enhancing their speaking skills. In fact, understanding language components such as vocabulary and grammatical structures appear to be necessary yet insufficient. What makes speaking distinct from the other skills is that the speaker needs to have quick access to all the relevant knowledge required to produce the appropriate language in relatively short lags of time, whereas in other skills the learners normally have enough time to match the input with the existing knowledge, for example, in reading or writing or to search for the accurate forms to produce the language with no immediate recipient who might be waiting even some times impatiently to receive the language, for example, in writing. It can be realized that the level of understanding of learners is assessed through the knowledge they have such as religious, technical, and cultural knowledge or topic familiarity. In reality, students meet difficulty to show their opinion because of a lack of general knowledge. Turner, Husman and Schallert (2002) said that *"a person's background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a collection of 'abstracted residue' that has been formed from all of life's experiences"*. Some researchers have investigated the effect of background knowledge on improving language learning in general, and learning language skills and sub-skills in particular. Some specialists consider the role of schematic knowledge as a determining factor affecting and influencing language components, especially comprehension. Brown and Yule (1983) define schemata as *"organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation*

of discourse." They said that the listener uses two basic principles to relate the new information to his or her previous experience: the principle of analogy, i.e., things will be as they were before and the principle of minimal change, i.e., things are as like as possible to how they were before. Gebhard (2000) pointed out that background knowledge relates to our real-world experiences and expectations that we have. This knowledge is very important when we consider the language processing problems of English learners.

2.4 Related Studies

As indicated in certain following studies (Cao et al, 2021; Huynh, 2020; Trinh, 2019; Vo et al, 2018), a variety of researchers have investigated challenges surrounding English speaking in the last decade.

In 2021, a group of researchers (Cao Minh Ky Cao, Thai Cong Dan, Chau Vinh Thanh, Thach Chanh Da, Le Minh Hieu, Phu Thi Hong Chau) who are English teachers in the Mekong Delta, collaborated to conduct a study entitled *"ELF Students' Speaking Skills: Difficulties and Solutions: A Case at Can Tho University, Vietnam."* It aimed to investigate the difficulties that many English students faced during their English-speaking courses at university, and also hope to provide possible solutions or directions to take into account or at the very least mitigate these problems for students on their process of becoming future fluent English speakers. A survey was conducted on 43 English-majored students ranging from freshmen to seniors at Can Tho University. The results showed the primary cause leading to unfluent speeches in English was the lack of vocabulary needed to convey thoughts and ideas. The solutions were to be an increased interaction with the language itself and also the improvement of other essential English skills.

In 2020, Huynh Thi Anh Tram from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Social Sciences, Ba Ria-Vung Tau University carried out the research *"Problems of Learning Speaking Skills Encountered by English Major Students at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University, Vietnam."* The aim of the research was to discover and analyze the problems in learning speaking skills faced by English major students at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University (BVU), 65 students participated in this study by completing the questionnaire made by the researcher. The result reveals that the dominant problems these students often encounter are associated with linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. Although students have striven to deal with their learning and speaking problems, their attempts seem to be unsuccessful. Therefore, some recommendations in the light of findings are also presented in this research.

Trinh Thi Tuyet performed a study in 2019 titled *"Difficulties in English Speaking Skill of Thuongmai University's Majored English Freshmen and Solutions"* to offer background on English and English speaking. The paper also indicated some problems and difficulties that English learners have to encounter when speaking English. Based on given theories and previously related studies, the paper conducted a survey and made a questionnaire to interview English major freshmen. The study showed the frequency of learning English speaking of freshmen and the main way that most of freshmen applied

when they practiced speaking English. Afterward, the study showed the advantages and disadvantages of their learning ways and found out some main difficulties and problems they face to. Then, for each difficulty and problem, the paper provided some solutions to deal with, solutions for students and for Thuongmai University's students as well.

Vo Phuong Quyen, Pham Thi My Nga, and Ho Thao Nguyen conducted research at Can Tho University in 2018 named *"Challenges to Speaking Skills Encountered by English-majored Students: A Story of One Vietnamese University in the Mekong Delta"* to look into the challenges of speaking skills faced by English-majored freshmen in a Vietnamese university. The data was obtained from the questionnaire with 131 students, individual interviews with lecturers, and class observation. The findings show that English freshmen faced both internal and external challenges, especially the latter ones regarding the limitation of the English-speaking environment and extracurricular activities. Possible measures are proposed to tackle such challenges in helping students speak English more effectively.

In summary, despite the fact that many studies have focused on the difficulties faced by English learners in speaking, there are still a few concerns about pointing out difficulties encountered by first-year English-majoring students at Tay Do University.

3. Research Aims, Research Question, Hypothesis

3.1 Research Aims
The study aims to identify some of the difficulties that freshmen majoring in English at Tay Do University have encountered when speaking. Students will benefit from the study's findings since they could enable students to recognize their own challenges. Since then, they have been able to discover several English-speaking techniques that are valuable to their learning.

3.2 Research Question
This study is conducted in order to answer the following question:
"What are common difficulties in speaking that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University experience?"

3.3 Research Hypothesis
According to the literature review, it is hypothesized that most of the English majored freshmen at Tay Do University experience some difficulties in speaking which are relevant to factors such as linguistic factors, psychological factors, and background knowledge.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Design

The research is carried out at Tay Do University which is a university in the Mekong Dela. English-majored freshmen are the research population who will be delivered the questionnaire for the researcher collects information about their problems in speaking. In addition, the researcher also selects randomly several students to complete the interview questions for the purpose of making the research more specific and objective. This is a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies.

4.2 Participants

The research participants are 85 students of first-year English majors course 15 at Tay Do University. They are aged from 18 to 25 years old. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English is their foreign language. These students mostly come from urban areas and a small number comes from rural regions. Besides, they have been learning English about 8 years. All of the participants have studied speaking and listening as two subjects in class. Their main material is Speaknow 1 and 2 coursebook, and they have many chances to practice English in class with both Vietnamese and foreign English-speaking teachers.

4.3 Instruments

The instrument of this study is questionnaires. The questionnaire is used to gather information from students. It can survey difficulties in English speaking. Furthermore, the questionnaire can be used to find the causes of difficulties.

4.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire has two parts. Part 1 included 4 questions that aim at getting background information from students such as participants' English learning years, participants' perspectives toward English speaking skills, etc. Part 2 is a table involving 18 statements relevant to the difficulties of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University in speaking with five levels of assessment such as strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree, and strongly disagree. Students could tick on the appropriate column next to the statements.

4.3.2 Interview

The interview for students is designed to get more information about the difficulties of English-majored freshmen in speaking. It consists of 4 interview questions that mentioned students' thoughts about their English-speaking interests, English-speaking role in real life, their difficulties in English speaking, and the way to improve their own speaking skills.

4.4 Procedure

This research is conducted in twelve weeks as the following procedure:

Step	Duration	Activities
1	The first 3 weeks	▪ Correcting the research topic. ▪ Submitting the framework of the research. ▪ Writing chapter 1, 2, 3.
2	The 4th week to the 6th week	▪ Designing the questionnaire and the interview.
3	The 7th week to the 9th week	▪ Receiving feedback from the supervisor.
4	The last 3 weeks (10th week to 12th week)	▪ Analyzing the data collected from the questionnaire and the interview. ▪ Writing chapter 4, 5. ▪ Completing the research.

5. Expected Outcome

There is fact that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University could encounter some difficulties in speaking related to two main points, namely linguistic factors (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation), psychological factors (confidence and motivation), and background knowledge.

5.1 Linguistic Factors
English-majored first-year students have had to deal with many problems related to linguistics when speaking. Firstly, most students cannot entirely express their ideas smoothly, and the words they use when speaking are not absolutely appropriate for the context due to a lack of vocabulary. Secondly, these students have faced challenges in grammatical structures. In fact, they hardly ever create a grammatically correct sentence completely, resulting in the wrong content being conveyed. Thirdly, poor pronunciation is also a direct way leading to the ineffective speaking performance of students. They are unable to make the audiences understand what they said because of mispronunciation.

5.2 Psychological Factors
Initially, most students claim that lacking confidence is one of the psychological factors they have to make every effort to deal with. Most of them realize that being unconfident causes their speaking's failure. In terms of motivation, this factor also plays a significant role in a successful conversation. However, almost every student has said that due to demotivation, they cannot create an effective English conversation.

5.3 Background Knowledge
For English majors, background knowledge is also another worry while learning and developing their speaking skills. Many students have admitted that they suffer difficulties to show their ideas due to the shortage of general knowledge. These speakers have less information about religion, culture, technology, etc. to be able to discuss with

the speaking partner. They sometimes have no topics to communicate with their partners. As a result, this causes an unsuccessful conversation.

To be brief, basing on the difficulties mentioned in this study, the researcher expects that the first-year English majors at Tay Do University can realize and overcome their obstacles in English speaking. In addition, teachers can encourage and suggest appropriate solutions for students to help them tackle their speaking problems.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors
Phan Thi Minh Uyen, M.A. Thi Minh Uyen Phan received her B.A degree of University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City. She also graduated in Applied Linguistics from La Trobe University in Australia. The author has more than 20 years of experience teaching English and is currently a senior lecturer at Tay Do University. She is an expert in both English and French. She had done some researches and obtained qualifications in the fields of training workshop and teaching before that.
Phan Thi Dieu, B.A Phan Thi Dieu has just graduated in bachelor's degree of English major from Tay Do University in Can Tho, Vietnam. She is proficient in computer skills, informatics and language skills. Her research interest includes active learning, methodologies, and strategies.

References

Baker, J. & Westrup, H. (2003). *Essential Speaking Skills: A Handbook for English Language Teachers*. London: Continuum.

Bowen, J. D., Madsen, H. and Hilferty, A. (1985). *TESOL techniques and procedures*. Cambridge: Newbury House.

Brilhart, B. (1965). *The relationship between some aspects of communicative speaking and communicative listening*. Journal of Communication.

Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Teaching the Spoken Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by Principles-An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Prentice Hall Regents.

Burns, A. & Joyce, H. (1997). *Focus on speaking*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.

Cao, C., Dan, T., Thanh, C., Hieu, L. & Chau, P. (2021). ELF Students' Speaking Skills: Difficulties and Solutions: A Case at Can Tho University, Vietnam. *The First International Conference on Government Education Management and Tourism, 1* (1).

Cavid, L. (2001). *Language teaching methodology: Textbook for teachers*. Sydney: National Center for English language Teaching and Research.

Chaney A. L. & Burd T. L. (1998). *Teaching Speaking*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Crookes, G., & Schmidt R.W. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning, 41*(4), 469-512.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2005). Second language accent and pronunciation teaching: a research-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly, 39*(3), 379-397.

Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner, Mahwah*, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gebhard, J. (2000). *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language: A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology Guide*. United States of America: The University of Michigan Press.

Harmer, M. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Fourth Edition. England: Pearson Education Limited.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hiebert, E. H., & Kamil, M. L. (2005). *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary: Bringing Research to Practice*. New Jersey, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Horwitz, E., Elain, K., & Michael, B. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Joann Cope Source: The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125-130.

Kamil, M. L., & Hiebert, E. H. (2005). *Teaching and learning vocabulary: perspectives and persistent issues*. In E. H. Hiebert and M. L. Kamil (Eds.), Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice, 1-23. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

McCarthy, M. (1990). *Vocabulary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking. New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis.

Norris-Holt, J. (2002) Motivation as a contributing factor in Second Language Acquisition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nunan, D. (1992). Research method in language learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. USA: Heinle & Heinle Publisher.

Pourhosein Gilakjani, A. (2011). A Study on the Situation of Pronunciation Instruction in ESL/EFL Classrooms. Journal of Studies in Education, 1(1), 1-15.

Quyen, V., Nga, P. & Nguyen, H. (2018). Challenges to speaking skills encountered by English-majored students: A story of one Vietnamese university in the Mekong Delta. *Can Tho University Journal of Science, 54*(5), 38-44.

Redmond, M. V. & Vrchota, D. (2007). *Everyday Public Speaking*. England: Pearson Education.

Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching Foreign Language Skills (2nd edition)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University.

Rubin, H. J., Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner: Toward learner autonomy (2nd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Swan, M. (1998). *Seven teaching grammar – and two good ones*. English Teaching Professional, 7, 3-5.

Thornbury, S. & Slade, D. (2007). *Conversation: From description to pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tram, H. (2020). *Problems of Learning Speaking Skills Encountered by English Major Students at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University, Vietnam*. Faculty of Foreign Languages and Social Sciences, Ba Ria-Vung Tau University.

Tuyet, T. (2019). *Difficulties in English Speaking Skill of Thuongmai University's Majored English Freshmen and Solutions*. VNU Journal of Trade Science.

Ur, K. (1996). *A Course in Language Teaching Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Xinghua, J. (2007). Psychological Problems of Middle-School Students in English Learning. Available at: http://joywordblog.163.com/blog/static/34949425200761264614847/

Zaremha, A. (2006). *Speaking professionally*. Canada: Thompson South-Western.

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Students

Dear friends,

We are teachers from English Faculty at Tay Do University. We are conducting the research proposal entitled *"Common Difficulties in Speaking of English-Majored Freshmen at Tay Do University"* which is designed to collect your thoughts for our paper finish. Please spend your time completing the following questions with your own answers. Thanks so much!

Personal Background

Class: ……………………………………….

Age: ……………………………………….

Gender: ……………………………………….

I have studied English for ……….. years.

Part 1: Please read the following questions carefully and choose the appropriate answer(s) for each question. Give specific answers if needed.

1. Where are you from?
- A) City
- B) Countryside

2. What do you think about English speaking skill?
- C) Very important
- D) Important
- E) Neutral
- F) Not important
- G) Not important at all

3. What do you think about your English-speaking skill?
- H) Very good
- I) Good
- J) Neutral
- K) Bad
- L) Very bad

4. What are some difficulties that you have faced in English speaking? (more than one is acceptable)
- M) Vocabulary
- N) Grammar
- O) Pronunciation
- P) Confidence
- Q) Motivation
- R) Background knowledge

Part 2: Please **check (✔) only one** column for each statement in the following table, according to the **5-degree Likert-type scale**, namely *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree,* and *Strongly Agree*.

No	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Vocabulary is actually a big challenge for me in any English conversation.					
2	Due to a lack of vocabulary, I cannot convey my messages to the listeners when speaking.					
3	I seldom utter a completely proper sentence when speaking due to my shortage of vocabulary.					
4	I often get bad marks when studying an English-speaking subject due to grammatical errors.					
5	The listeners cannot understand what I speak because of my poor grammar use.					
6	It finds difficult for me to produce a sentence with correct grammatical structures when speaking.					
7	Pronunciation is a challenging aspect for me in speaking practices.					
8	Due to poor pronunciation, the listeners are unable to understand my speaking content.					
9	In English speaking, I usually make a lot of mistakes in pronouncing.					
10	Because of a lack of confidence, the listeners are unlikely to understand my speaking content.					
11	Unconfidence is a great problem affecting my speaking performance.					
12	I regularly keep silent in almost every English conversation because I feel unconfident.					
13	Lack of motivation makes my speaking performance unsuccessful.					
14	Due to demotivation, I cannot create an effective English conversation.					
15	I have less information about religion, culture, technology, etc. to be able to discuss with the speaking partner.					
16	Lacking background knowledge makes my conversation boring and ineffective.					
17	The conversation between my partners and me often lasts shortly because of my limited real-world experience telling.					
18	I have difficulties in communicating with unfamiliar topics.					

Thank You for Your Help!

Appendix B: Interview for Students

Dear friends,

We are teachers from English Faculty at Tay Do University. We are conducting the research proposal entitled **"Common Difficulties in Speaking of English-Majored Freshmen at Tay Do University"** is designed to collect your opinions for our paper finish. Please spend your time completing the following questions by your own answers. Thanks so much!

Personal Background

Student's name: ………………………………………….

Class: ……………………………………….

Age: …………………………………………

Gender: ………………………………………….

1. Do you think speaking English is difficult or easy? Explain your opinion.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

2. **What do you think the role of speaking in this society?**

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

3. What are your difficulties in English speaking?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

4. In your opinion, what should you do to improve your English-speaking skill?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

Thank You for Your Help!