
The Difficulties in Speaking of English Majored Freshmen at a University in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: *This research survey was an attempt to present the process of study about "Difficulties in speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University". The participants of the research were 36 English majored freshmen from Bachelor of English at Tay Do University. The instruments of this study were questionnaires, paper interview questions, and the observation sheet. English-majored freshmen just begin to learn speaking English skill. Thus, they would get many challenges in speaking English. The results of this research would highlight the difficulties in speaking English that English majored freshmen faced. The goal was to identify problems, facilitate solutions, and to assist teachers and students to overcome these difficulties together.*

KEY WORDS: speaking, English majored freshmen, university

INTRODUCTION

English is classified as an international language. Jenkins (2000) and Widdowson (1997) state the term "English as an International Language." The fact that English is widely spoken in so many nations has allowed it to truly attain global significance (Crystal, 2003). There is no significant threat to English's status as the worldwide language of choice or its widespread use. Teaching English now focuses more on teaching students how to communicate in the language than on helping them become experts in structure. With this common trend, English in Vietnam has become one of the important, compulsory subjects at schools and been taught from primary to high school system. English is now considered as the key to open the globe barrier that includes education, medical major, economy, technical major, and culture. This makes learning English in demand and has many advantages, such as improvement of our knowledge, more job opportunities, and effective interaction with people when traveling to other countries.

In Vietnam, students have to face many problems when they learn English. They must develop four main skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Among them, the speaking and listening are considered the essential skills of real everyday life. Proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well-rounded communicator, but the ability to speak skillfully provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. The capacity to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings provides the speaker with these important advantage). The purpose of

language is communication and the aim of speaking in a language context is to promote effective communication. People skilling at speaking would be good at connecting and establishing mutual respect for others within the relationship. However, desiring to speak English competently does not come easy.

In fact, freshmen who learn speaking skill claim that they often have difficulties in speaking English because of they lack the vocabulary and ideas, incorrect pronunciation, and shyness (being afraid of making mistakes). English majored freshmen especially English majored freshmen at Tay Do University are an example. The Tay Do University is a private university established in 2006. At Tay Do University, the role of English is appreciated. Especially, the English majored freshmen who are taught by Masters of Art inside or outside country. Therefore, the English majored freshmen can feel assurance and believe about the teaching and learning quality at Tay Do University. Most of English majored freshmen come from the countryside where English has been taught by traditional teaching method. Teachers are usually only focusing on grammar and vocabulary, they do not seem to focus other vital skills such as speaking, pronunciation, listening. There is very little time for freshmen to practice speaking English skill. In fact, when the freshmen enter Tay Do University, they feel strange when exposed to new methods and lessons. The most of the time in class teachers guide freshmen practice English skills. Freshmen have to do many exercises to improve their skills. At home, they must have self-learning to keep up with university degrees.

Most freshmen do not speak English well or they cannot understand what others say. They cannot express their thoughts and idea in English. Therefore, they often feel shy when speaking English. “Indeed, shyness is very likely to occur when freshmen speak English.” (Baker & Westrup, 2003). Freshmen often feel shy when they do not have enough vocabulary to express their thoughts, pronounce incorrectly, and cannot comprehend what others are saying to them. These reasons make the freshmen have lack of confidence. General, English majored freshmen at Tay Do University have many difficulties with speaking skill. The research “Difficulties in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University” aims to find the real difficulties so that it can be useful for freshmen in their learning process.

The significance

It is so difficulty for English majored freshmen at a University, especially in Tay Do University to speak English proficiently and fluently at the beginning. To find out the derivation of difficulties in speaking skill, the research pointed out some difficulties affecting the freshmen’s speaking skill:

1. Lack of vocabulary,
2. Incorrect pronunciation,
3. Lack of background knowledge,
4. Effect of listening comprehension,
5. Effect of psychological (learners’ attitude, motivation and strategies)

. That helps the teachers and freshmen to have solutions to overcome these difficulties, then makes freshmen have better speaking skill and upgrades their English speaking abilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of speaking and its importance

Definition of speaking

Carter and Nunan (2001) state that, "Speaking in a second language involves the development of a particular type of communication skill." Widdowson (1984) adds that, "Communication through speaking is performed face to face interaction and occurs as part of a dialogue or other form of verbal exchange."

Speaking is an art of communication. There are many definitions of speaking. "Speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing one's thought and feeling in spoken language" in Oxford Advantage Dictionary (p.13). While Brown (1994), Burns & Joyce (1997) say that, "Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information."

In order to express ideas effectively, speaker should know exactly what they wants to speak or to communicate. Speakers have many communication purposes such as exchanging information, establishing the relationship or terminates. A good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

The importance of speaking

Nowadays, speaking skill is very important in the life. Confidence in speaking is keys to achievement in many aspects of education, as well as in work and personal life. Children gradually develop the ability to talk, learn, share and communicate. Future success at school, in business, in artistic and intellectual pursuits and in relationships will depend on these skills. When someone speaks to other person, there will be a relationship. Speaking as development of the relationship between speaker and listener. In addition speaking determining which logical linguistic, psychological a physical rules should be applied in a given communicate situation". English has been become second language in various different countries. It is used for conferences, debates as well as social gatherings. Speaking has been considered one of the most important skills in second language teaching and assessment. Zaremba (2006) shows that while reading and listening are considered to be the two receptive skills in language learning and use, writing and speaking are the other two productive skills necessary to be integrated in the development of effective communication. Of all the four macro English skills, speaking seems to be the most important skill required for communication. Zaremba (2006) also explains that, "Speaking skill or communication skill is usually placed ahead of work experience, motivation, and academic credentials as criteria for new recruitment for employment."

Difficulties in English speaking

Vocabulary

The first step to learn a new language is learning vocabulary; it is the basic element and the most important. Vocabulary is the foundation for starting to learn English especially in speaking skill. Vocabulary is one of the foundational components of any language. For language learners, vocabulary is one of the most important areas of knowledge (Cameron, 2001). A language cannot be effectively taught without its vocabulary. So, vocabulary is the spirit, or heart, of language. As the heart gives blood to the entire body, vocabulary provides key aspects for global knowledge

through languages. Without proper vocabulary freshmen will not express their ideas correctly and comprehend what others are saying. Vocabulary is an even stronger influence when it comes to public communication. An advocate who has a large of vocabulary will be able to communicate more efficiently than those who do not.

Learning vocabulary is not simple. If the freshmen do not know how to learn vocabulary properly, they will forget it very quickly. Green and Meara (1995) say that, "It is not surprising that learners consider English vocabulary as their greatest language problems." Similarly, Richards & Rodgers (1986) argue that, "Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning."

In addition, most freshmen face many difficulties when learning vocabulary. They cannot remember a large of vocabulary. Freshmen cannot learn vocabulary well because they have some bad habits in learning vocabulary. For example, freshmen only memorize the meaning of vocabulary by heart, but they do not know how to use it in context. Especially, they do not know how to distinguish the part of speech (Noun, Verb, Adjective, and Adverb). Another bad habit of not practicing is also the cause of forgetting vocabulary. The structure of vocabulary is complex. Prefixes, suffixes, and root words structure are often confusing. Reading is an excellent way to learn more vocabulary, but freshmen rarely read other English books. If they know how to learn the right way, they will be able to learn vocabulary and English better. Besides, many English words have more than one meaning. If freshmen only know one meaning, it is easy to get mistake. For example, the noun "Bank", the first meaning is an organization that provides various financial services and the second meaning is the side of a river. In the sentence "John goes to the bank to go fishing", if freshmen only know the first meaning of the word "Bank", they will misunderstand the meaning of sentence.

Furthermore, freshmen will understand vocabulary better when they pronounced it correctly. Thus, pronunciation is also a huge factor in affecting English-speaking skill.

Pronunciation

One of the most important aspects of learning English would be pronunciation. It is an obvious fact that if a freshman mispronounces, the audience will undoubtedly misunderstand or will not comprehend what freshman is trying to say. Moreover, efficient freshmen must devote countless hours to practice their pronunciation skills. Hornby (1995) urges that pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken, the way in which a word is pronounced, the way a person speaks the words of language. In fact, the speakers will succeed in communication if they are good at pronunciation.

However, for the majority of English as second language freshmen, pronunciation is often the most difficult skill to acquire. Charles and Lyle (2004) state, "Speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop. To speak in foreign language learners must master the sound system of the language." In addition, the English pronunciation structure itself is complex, and possibly very difficult to understand. There are twenty vowel sounds; the first 12 of the English vowel sounds are monophthongs. The tongue stays at one fixed location in the mouth to produce each monophthong. The next eight English vowel sounds are diphthongs. They present greater difficulty to freshmen learning English because the tongue travels between two fixed locations. Due to these complex structures, there is not a simple relationship between spelling and pronunciation in English. In addition, English is a 'stress-timed' language –

words and sentences have strong and weak parts. This is different to Vietnamese; where parts of words and some words themselves may be given the same exact stress in the sentence.

When learning a second language, for most freshmen, their mother language heavily influences the way they initially try to pronounce words. Therefore, stimulate freshmen to try to replicate Vietnamese speech patterns or styles when speaking English. In fact, generally they will not speak up due to the fear of making mistakes and be embarrassed in front of their peers. With these factors combined, a great number of freshmen have many difficulties in pronunciation. For example, freshmen often mispronounce the word swallow; they do not pronounce the final consonant such as /t/, /k/, /p/, /tʃ/. That leads to mispronouncing words nearly identical such as Cat – Catch, Sheep – Ship, Leave – Live. It can be affirmed that pronunciation in speaking skills is the biggest challenge for freshmen.

In conclusion, pronunciation is very important in speaking English. If freshmen want to speak English well, they must try to practice. Besides, there are other difficulties affecting English-speaking skill. One of them is background knowledge.

Background knowledge

Besides learning vocabulary and practicing pronunciation, freshmen have to have background knowledge. Brown and Yule (1983) define, “Organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse.” Freshmen know more information that will help them speak better. Freshmen use accordant words to describe idea for other people easy to receptive. A freshman with much knowledge about the subject speaks more fluently. However today, there is so much information to learn, this is very difficult for freshmen to be able to know all. It is not simple for freshmen to find relevant knowledge to the English-speaking topic in class. Most freshmen do not have enough words to read the article in English. It is even more difficult when learning to listen for information. On the other hand, Baker and Westrup (2003) state that, “They [learners] may have little idea about what to say, they may not know the words to use, or they may not be sure how to use the grammar.” Freshmen often do not know a lot of knowledge about the subject that they have to say in class. Therefore, freshmen need to exchange knowledge everyday to have many ideas that will help them to speak English better.

To get more information, freshmen are not only reading English but also listening English. Listening comprehension can help freshmen to get information and communicate effectively. Among those factors, listening comprehension is also an essential part of English speaking fluency. There are relationships between speaking ability and listening comprehension.

Effect of listening comprehension

Listening is one of the most important aspects of effective communication. Listening comprehension means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the freshmen feel about what they are communicating. Rost (2002) describes listening comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners are involved in constructing meaning. Listeners understand the listening input through sound discrimination, previous knowledge, grammatical structures and both of other linguistic or non-linguistic tools. Speaking skills cannot be developed unless we develop listening skills. Listening skill affects other skills in learning the English language. Listening is an essential skill which develops faster than

speaking and often affects the development of reading and writing abilities in learning a new language.

Especially, listening comprehension and speaking ability share a very close relationship of communication. They could not exist without the other. For example, when a little kid grows up, they repeat things that they hear from the people around them. If freshmen cannot hear it well, it is so hard for them to communicate. According to Nunan (1998), listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact, over 50% of time that learners spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening. To listen and understand what others say is a difficult thing for freshmen. They have to spend a lot of time and effort to be able to hear well.

In order to help freshmen be improved with their listening skill, it is needed to find out their listening problems which cause difficulties to them. As Flowerdew & Miller (1996) assume that the problems of the learners in listening were for the speed of delivery, new terminology and concept, difficulty in focusing and the physical environment. Freshmen cannot identify the key words or the content words of the listening tasks. Some listeners thought that meaning resides within the unfamiliar words so they need a huge amount of vocabulary. On facing a new word, they tend to find out the meaning rather than infer it from the context. Vietnamese often hear familiar with the Vietnamese accents. The listeners have tendency to get familiar with the accents which they mostly listen. Freshmen often face this problem in listening to other accents. Besides, freshmen cannot listen to anything in noise environment. In sum up, freshmen want to develop English-speaking skill they have to listen more to learn pronunciation and new words.

Psychological factors

The factor causing difficulties in English speaking is psychological factors. This psychological factor consists of learners' attitude, motivation and strategies. Each of these problems is mentioned below.

Learners' attitude

Learner's attitude is also an aspect that affects studying results good or bad. Attitude is usually defined as a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain thing such as an idea, object, person, or situation. Freshmen have positive or negative attitudes towards the language they want to learn or the people who speak it. Second language learners, benefit from positive attitudes, and negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation.

Confidence is characteristic that make freshmen learn well. Songsiri (2007) says that, "in language learning, especially speaking, freshmen' confidence is the key factor to improve their learning." Confidence is the ability to believe freshmen can do something and the courage to do it. However, it is difficult to build confidence of each freshman. Most freshmen feel shy and anxious when speaking English because they are afraid of making mistakes. They do not have enough vocabulary and knowledge to speak English, so they cannot speak fluently. Especially, they cannot listen to what others talk with them. To speak English well, freshmen must have knowledge and confidence. There are three elements to confidence: 'cognitive' – a person's knowledge of their abilities; 'performance' – their ability to do something; and 'emotional' – feeling comfortable about the former two aspects.

Motivation

Psychological factors influence on freshmen learning. Motivation is surely one of the most potent. Motivation of the students is one of the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning the language. Learning English as a second language offers many benefits in today's world not only as a means to communicate with people in many countries but also it serves to show a person's intelligence, but learners often complain that they cannot think of anything to say and they have no motivation from their friends, family and teachers to express themselves. Rivers (1968) believes that, "The learners have nothing to express maybe because the teacher had chosen a topic which is not familiar for them or about which they know very little." It is difficult for many students to respond when the teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language because they might have little ideas about what to say, which vocabulary to use, or how to use the grammar correctly. When a freshman is willing to learn what has become known as the International language of today's modern world it shows they want to be a success. Each freshman has a motivation to do different goals in learning English. There are some main purposes in learning English. Freshmen want to find a good job with high salary, go to abroad and widen knowledge.

In fact, when speaking English, the freshmen in the first year are not confident to speak or communicate in English with others. Hence, when freshmen have not full of motivation, they cannot overcome difficulties of English speaking.

Strategies

To develop freshmen's communicative competence in English language, learning strategies are important because training freshmen to use learning strategies can help them become better. The goal of learning strategies is for freshmen to become independent people with the ability to use strategies aptly in a variety of contexts. Therefore, freshmen should have a suitable strategy for themselves based on the situations and learning goals. Freshmen should have much practicing time to apply their learning strategies. Learning strategies are thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal.

In short, there are many factors which effect on speaking skill but there are main factors which are vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge, listening comprehension and psychological obstacles. When students are lacking of vocabulary, they do not how to show their feeling, thinking, ideas and etc. Besides, if students pronounce wrong words the listener cannot understand what students say and lacking of background knowledge is also one of the reasons makes students get difficulties in speaking skill. Moreover, psychological obstacles are very important in speaking skill. Many English students speak badly not because they lack vocabulary or understanding, but because they are nervous, worried, and afraid of appearing foolish. Therefore, students must train themselves. In addition to studying English vocabulary, pronunciation, culture, students must also study their own psychology.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research aim

Almost English freshmen recognize that speaking is important skill in communication. The first purpose of this study is to investigate the difficulties that English majored freshmen have to face when they learn English-speaking subject. There are the main speaking problem are lack of vocabulary, pronunciation incorrect, lack of background knowledge, effect of listening

comprehension on speaking, and effect of psychological. That makes the freshmen feel confused and worried when speaking English. The second purpose is freshmen's attitude toward speaking English. Throughout the study, it is hoped that the study will be a useful reference that helps freshmen to recognize their problems then speak English better. Since then, they could be more flexible and confident to avoid the mistakes in speaking process.

Research questions

With the aims mentioned in the previous section, the research was conducted to answers the two following questions:

1. What are the freshmen's attitudes toward speaking English?
2. What difficulties do the freshmen majoring in English often encounter in learning speaking?

Research method

Design

The survey was designed basing on finding to answers the research questions. Participants were the main object in this research. There were 36 English majored freshmen in English class, at Tay Do University. The first, questionnaires were designed and sent to the freshmen to collect the information. The second, paper interviews for students were used to inquire freshmen's ideas. The third, researchers began with the observation sheet. The researchers took many notes in the observation. Finally, the information for study would be gathered and analyzed from the questionnaires and the paper interviews for students and the observation to conclude the final results.

Participants

The participants in this research were 36 freshmen in Bachelor of English class at Tay Do University. There were 7 males and 29 females. The ages range from 18 to 24. Vietnamese is their mother tongue and English is considered as their foreign language. They come from different provinces in Vietnam. The time they studied English was from 4 to more than 8 years. However, they had to learn many other subjects in high school. When studying at Tay Do University, their main learning subjects were English and exposed to new teaching methods. At the first year, they learned speaking and listening with Interaction I book. They had to practice speaking skill more than when they were in high school. Most freshmen recognized that they faced many difficulties in speaking English. Choosing English-majored freshmen is participants for research because they just begin to learn speaking English skill at Tay Do University. Thus, they would get many challenges in speaking English. This will help researchers to do research easily and find out the difficulties correctly in speaking English.

Instruments

The instruments of this research were the questionnaires, the paper interviews for students and the observation sheet. Firstly, researchers used questionnaires with the purpose of investigate the obstacle in English speaking. Secondly, students' paper interviews were also distributed for ten freshmen to get the information they had given in the questionnaires and to specify more details about the main reason causing difficulties in English speaking. Lastly, the researchers observed

English class to know the actual situation in speaking English. The three instruments were useful in the research.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was an important tool in the research. Thirteen questions had used to explore difficulties in speaking English of 36 English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. Questions was designed by multiple choice questions for freshmen to choose the answer A, B, C, D. Question 1 was about freshmen's years of learning English. Next, questions 2, 3 aimed to survey the freshmen's learning purpose and motivation toward learning English. The questions 4, 5 were designed in order to know about important of speaking English as well as English speaking practicing time of the freshmen. Question 6 was built in order to find out freshmen's difficulties toward speaking English. The next, the freshmen's idea about practice time in speaking subject was showed in question 7. The main causes affecting freshmen's speaking skill were focused on the question number 8. Besides, the difficulties of freshmen in English speaking were found out from questions number 9 to 13. In which, from questions number 9 to 12, the researcher aimed to figure out linguistic causes (vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge and effect of listening comprehension) of freshmen in English speaking. The last, the freshmen's psychology was showed in question 13. Questionnaire was designed enough and suitable for freshmen to answer in 15 minutes.

Paper interviews for students

The paper interviews for students were conducted after doing the questionnaire. The researchers invited 10 freshmen among 36 freshmen in English class. They were five boys and five girls. The main purpose is collecting information such as detail ideas and thoughts directly. There were five interview questions which freshmen write out the answer on the paper. The paper interviews were also used to figure out the most difficult cause in English speaking of freshmen. Especially, freshmen's attitudes toward speaking English. That helped researchers to access accurately the participants.

Observation sheet

The observation was used to behold the freshmen difficulties when speaking English. During the speaking classes, the researchers observed carefully when freshmen speak English in front of class and they speak English with their group. Researchers noted about freshmen's problems in English speaking such as vocabulary, pronunciation, background knowledge, listening comprehension, shyness, confidence, volunteer and group working. In addition, the researchers also paid attention to freshmen's attitudes toward English speaking to make the research more completely.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the survey of English class, collecting the data of the questionnaires and the interviews, the results of the research were analyzed. There were three main of results: the questionnaires, the paper interviews for students and the observation sheet.

The freshmen's background of learning English

The freshmen's years of learning English

The data collected showed that more than a half of the total numbers of freshmen in English class (24/36) have studied English for eight years (66.5%). Whereas, 30.5% (11/36) of the freshmen have studied English for more than eight years. The percentage of freshmen studied English for four years was 3% (1/36). The option in this question based on the real situation of English studying in Vietnam. The participants in English class, if they were taught English at grade 6th that meant up to this moment they were in eight years in studying and if English was taught at grade 3rd that meant the freshmen who have studied English for ten years. Likewise, 4 years represented for freshmen who have studied English since high school. There were 66.5% of the participants have studied English for eight years that showed they were taught very late in learning English. Therefore, freshmen often had many difficulties in studying English, especially in English speaking because of different teaching quality in each high school. It was disadvantage for freshmen in English learning process.

The freshmen's motivation toward learning English

Table 1. The purpose of learning English

The purpose in learning English	Percentage
A. Study abroad/ Going abroad	19.4 %
B. Finding a good job with high salary	58.3 %
C. Widening your knowledge	8.3 %
D. Others	14 %

All of the freshmen had purpose and motivation for learning English. Each student had different learning purposes in which most of freshmen (58.3%) want to have a good job with high salary such as international diplomats, international tour guide, international translator, and teacher and so on. This rate indicated that freshmen studied English to plan for their future job. Notable figure was followed by 19.4% (7/36) freshmen learnt English with the aim to study abroad. Nowadays, English is the international language. Therefore, learning English will help freshmen to study abroad as well as make their dreams more easily. Likewise, 8.3% was the percentage of the widening knowledge purpose. The other purpose (being fond of learning English, communicating with foreigner from different countries...) was 14%. This was also a positive attitude can help freshmen to learn English better. Freshmen shared that "I liked English-speaking subject because my speaking skill was not good. I wanted to improve my speaking skill better. In addition, freshmen hoped that "If I spoke English fluently, I could communicate with foreigner friends and I could learn many things from them".

In addition, with the question about motivation in learning, most of freshmen agreed that their motivations were strong, with the percentage of 44.4%. It was equal to 16 freshmen. They loved and wanted to learn English. Beside that, many freshmen said that they lacked of motivation or

could not find motivation in learning which accounted for 36.2%. The last, weak motivation was chosen with 19.4%. This problem also contributed less to make freshmen have difficulties in learning as well as speaking English.

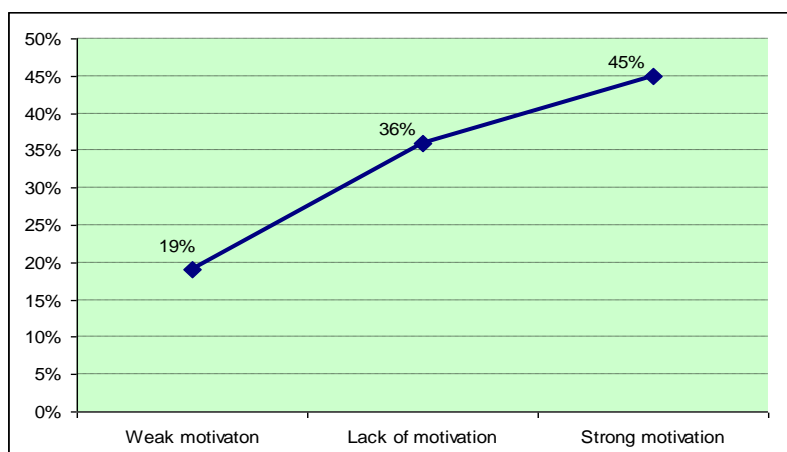


Figure 1. The freshmen's motivation toward learning English

The freshmen's standpoint about English Speaking

The next, three questions about freshmen's thought in English Speaking. They had many different ideas about speaking English. Just 14% of freshmen thought that speaking was not important and 8.3% of freshmen thought that speaking was normal in English. However, there were until 77.7% of freshmen agreeing on the very important role of speaking in English. It showed that many freshmen knew the importance of speaking English skill in their life and their future job.

To demonstrate the importance of speaking skill in the above question, the next question is the time to practice of freshmen in Speaking English every day. Indeed, more than half the numbers of freshmen practice speaking outside class. There were 30.5% of freshmen improve English speaking in 30 minutes a day. Moreover, percentage of 39% freshmen practice speaking one hour or more than in a day at home. Self-learning will help them improve their knowledge and skills faster. Freshmen said that they often listened to English conversation and English song, spoke with their classmate in outside. On the other hand, there were still 25% of freshmen practicing under the guidance of the teacher in the classroom. Only two freshmen sharing that they did not practice English at all, with the rate of 5.5%. It meant that they rarely practice English speaking even they were in class.

In fact, many freshmen shared that beginning to learn English in first year, they usually not familiar with the new methodology and extensive knowledge. Everyone had also difficulties when speaking English. Most of freshmen (58.3%) often face difficulties when they speak, pronounce English. There was some freshmen thought that they did not like English-speaking subject because his voice was not good. In addition, 36.2% of them agreed that they sometimes have difficulties in speaking English. Just two freshmen equivalent to 5% of freshmen confident that they rarely have difficulty when speaking English.

In brief, most of freshmen in English class had honest standpoint about English speaking. They could realize the importance of English speaking. It means that they wanted to focus on practicing English speaking to speak more proficiently.

The freshmen's idea about learning time in speaking English

Unfortunately, freshmen had to deal with many other obstacles causing difficulties in English speaking. It would be great if the freshmen had good environment and good time to practice English speaking. For English-speaking, freshmen practiced as much as they could that would help them to speak better and recognize their difficulties. Especially in university, freshmen had to self-learning, time learning of listening and speaking subject in class was 4 hours a week; it was only enough time to teacher guided the way to learn and introduced necessary lessons.

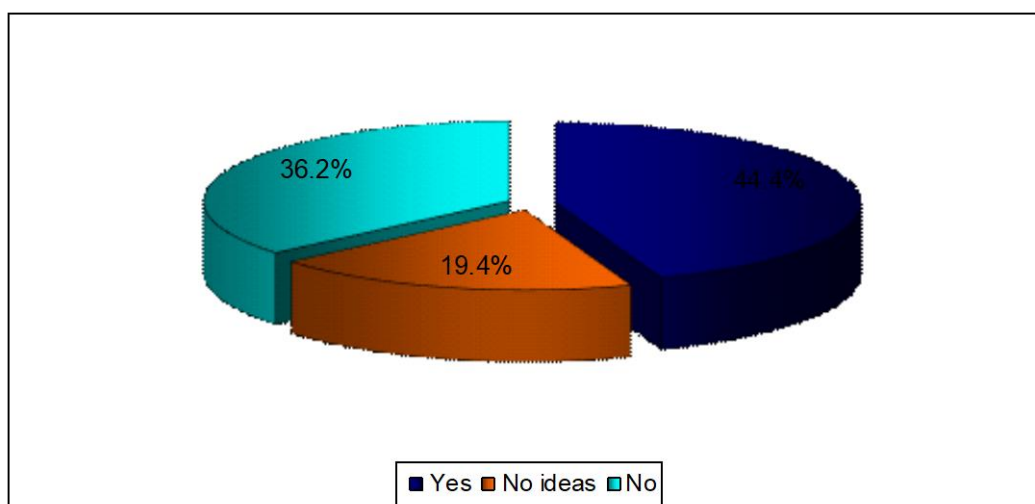


Figure 2. The freshmen's ideas about enough time in speaking practicing class

Question 7: Do you think there is enough time for practicing the English-speaking subject in class? There were 16 freshmen in the total of 36 freshmen (44,4%) chose the answer "Yes", 36.2% of freshmen chose the answer "No" and 19.4% of freshmen had no ideas. From result above showed that many freshmen chose the answer "Yes" and "No ideas" ought to control their learning time for English speaking. Moreover, the discussion time in class, many freshmen used Vietnamese to speak instead of English. It was not good for them because the practicing time for English speaking was limited. They only learned Listening and speaking subject in class one day a week. They must practice more, if freshmen wanted to be good speaker.

The difficulties in speaking English of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University

In the questionnaires, most of freshmen realized that they had difficulties in speaking English. There were also different opinions about these difficulties. Then, main difficulties that freshmen often faced in speaking English were investigated carefully. In detail, the rate of 69.4% (25/36) with idea is vocabulary. Actually, they want to speak English fluently, they must have a large of vocabulary. In addition, 38.9% of freshmen said that they could not pronounce correct, especially like native people. Next, they chose listening comprehension with 33.3% of freshmen. Listening and speaking have a close relationship, so to say they must hear. To help freshmen speak well,

background knowledge is notable aspect with 16.7 % of freshmen's choosing. And the last is freshmen's psychological with 8.3% of freshmen.

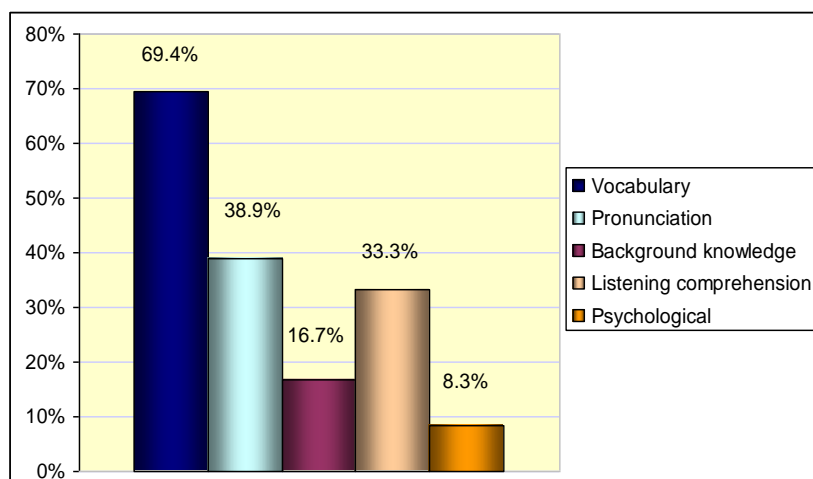


Figure 3. Difficulties in speaking English

In paper interview for students, Question 4: “What difficulties do you have to face when studying English speaking subject?” Some of the freshmen asserted lack of vocabulary, some thought pronunciation, and some affirmed lack of confidence was the difficult factor. In addition, some freshmen said that knowledge, listening comprehension affecting their speaking ability a lot. Obviously, lack of vocabulary had 9/10 freshmen who agreed that it was the biggest difficulty when speaking English. They said that when speaking in class, they could not express their thinking well because of lacking vocabulary. They had to spend much time to look up new words in dictionary. Furthermore, the way they used words was very clumsy that made other difficulty to understand. Besides, the factor which made freshmen could not speak fluently and had to spend much time to practice was pronunciation. There were 8/10 freshmen recognized that their pronunciation was often incorrect. Sometimes, they only could simulate nearly identical a word which they did not pronounce.

In observation, when teacher asked, most freshmen were very shy. Some freshmen suggested teacher that they could speak Vietnamese to express their ideas because they could not speak English. They rarely used intonation or linked the words. They also usually did not remember the vocabulary and they were weak at listening comprehension so the teacher had to repeat the questions many times. When freshmen answered the question or expressed their ideas, they did not know how to choose suitable words for others understand easily. There were some freshmen often spoken but they only repeat their ideas many times. They tried to speak although they made mistakes. It is difficulty to understand what they spoke.

As the result was showed in the figure above. Difficulties of freshman were express details through numbers correct and honest. That helps freshmen to can realize their difficulties to overcome it.

Vocabulary

Table 2. Difficulties in learning vocabulary

Difficulties	Percentages
A. Not remember a lot of vocabulary	52.8%
B. Complex structure of vocabulary	19.4%
C. Not know all meaning of a word (a word can have many meaning)	50%
D. Not able to distinguish the part of speech (Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb)	27.8%

The first foundation in learning English as well as speaking English was vocabulary. However, Vocabulary is the most popular difficulty in speaking English. There were many reasons causing difficulty to learning vocabulary. The table showed main reasons which freshmen often face when learning vocabulary. If freshmen want to speak English well, they have to have a large of vocabulary. To remember a large of vocabulary is not easy. This is one of difficulties in leaning vocabulary with 52.8% of students in English chose. There were many methods to learn vocabulary but it is difficulty to choose which one is the best. Freshmen shared that they used many ways to learn vocabulary. For example, they write words on paper and pasted it on many places in their hostel. However, it was not the best way. One word could have many meaning. Therefore, they could not know all meaning of word to use it correctly. It is also the second reason was chosen with percentage of 50%. With 27.8% of freshmen shared that they were not able to distinguish the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb). Perhaps, most of freshmen did not know about structure of lexical because they had not learned about it at high school. Only 19.4% (7/36) of freshmen chose this reason. However, it is also an important cause for them to understand and learn vocabulary easily. They did not have enough vocabulary to express their thought so they had to take time to look up the dictionary. Especially, when they work with group, they always spoke in Vietnamese and then translated into English.

Pronunciation

There were three main problems with pronunciation which freshmen in English class often have: problems with consonants and vowels, problems with the rhythm of English and problem with similar sounds. Not all freshmen have the same problems, but maybe one of these causes trouble for them. Moreover, time to practice was also a problem. Figure 4 will show difficulties when freshmen pronounce English.

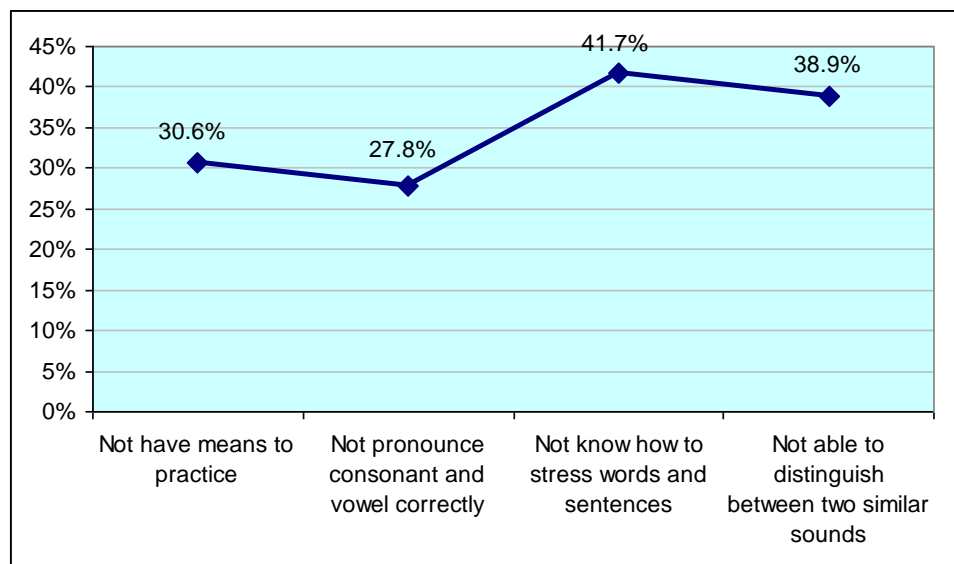


Figure 4. Difficulties in pronouncing English

In this case, percentages were approximately equal. This proves the majority of freshmen who had the same of difficulties. With 41.7% of freshmen said that they did not know how to stress words and sentences. They stressed with the way that they thought it was right. They just spoke peer without pressing the up and down, so this made their accent not like native people. Many freshmen also agreed with case they were not able to distinguish between two similar sounds with percentage of 38.9%. For example, two words were "Sheep" and "Ship". They pronounced them with the same sound. This made listener easy to confuse. Rate of 30.6 % freshmen worry about means to support their learning because their family condition did not give them. While learning pronunciation, they had to have a media to listen the right pronunciation. The fourth difficulty in pronouncing English was that freshmen could not pronounce consonant and vowel. There were 27.8% of student chose this answer. Especially in the case the final consonant such as /t/, /k/, /p/, /tʃ/, freshmen shared that it was difficulty to pronounce final consonant. Moreover, they did not know the way to put their tongue and way to open their mouth so that they could pronounce correctly. Freshmen recognized that their pronunciation was often incorrect. Sometimes, they only could simulate nearly identical a word which they did not pronounce. For example when they pronounced the word "Advantage" /əd'vɑ:ntɪdʒ/ → /əd'ventɪdʒ/. This lead they wrote on slide presentation the sentence "Advantage of making international friends".

Background knowledge

Table 3. Difficulties about background knowledge

Difficulties	Percentages
A. Difficulty to find documents related to the topic	33.3%
B. Too much knowledge to learn	11.1%
C. Not enough vocabulary to read	38.9%
D. Listening skill is not good	44.4%

Knowledge is necessary thing in the life. If freshmen want to be a good speaker, besides a large of vocabulary, they need to have wide background knowledge. Nowadays, there is so much information to learn such as custom, culture, traveling, sport, science and so on. This was very difficult for freshmen to be able to know all with percentage of 11.1%. Many freshmen (33.3%) agreed that they could not find documents related to the topic. They tried to search it on internet, looked up it at library, bookstore. However, they rarely found documents which they need. The lack of vocabulary could make freshmen difficult in finding documents to widen their knowledge. This was also freshmen chosen with percent of 38.9%. They shared that they could not read any documents, books or website page English fully because they lack of vocabulary. Many speaking topics made them feel be compulsory. They could not free to speak. Moreover, Listening was a way to find necessary knowledge but 44.4% of students said that they could not listen because their listening skill was not good. In sum up, knowledge was very necessary in speaking skill. However, many freshmen often faced difficulties in widening knowledge.

Listening comprehension

Table 4. Difficulties about listening comprehension

Percentages	52.8%	44.4%	19.4%	8.3%
Difficulties	A. Try to understand every word.	B. Not know the most important words.	C. Problem with different accents.	D. Background noise.

Listening and speaking have a close relationship. If freshmen want to speak well, they must listen well. Freshmen listen to teachers or foreigners who speak English in order to learn the ways pronunciation a word or sentence, the way to use slang words and so on. However, freshmen could not listen because of some detail causes. Percentage of 52.8% freshmen admitted that they could not listen what teacher spoke in class because they focus listen to every word in order to translate into Vietnamese. Although they tried their best to listen, they made mistake in listening skill. Freshmen often listen to every word because they did not know a key works with the rate of 44.4%. Besides, everyone had different accents that made 19.4% of freshmen faced difficulty when listening. They shared that they so hard to listen native people because they speak relative quickly

and surf the word. Finally, 8.3% of freshmen thought that they could not listen if background so noise. They wanted a quiet environment to listen. In class, teacher had to talk slowly and repeat many times about a problem so that freshmen were easy to hear and understand. Listening comprehension was aspects effect to speaking skill.

Psychological factors

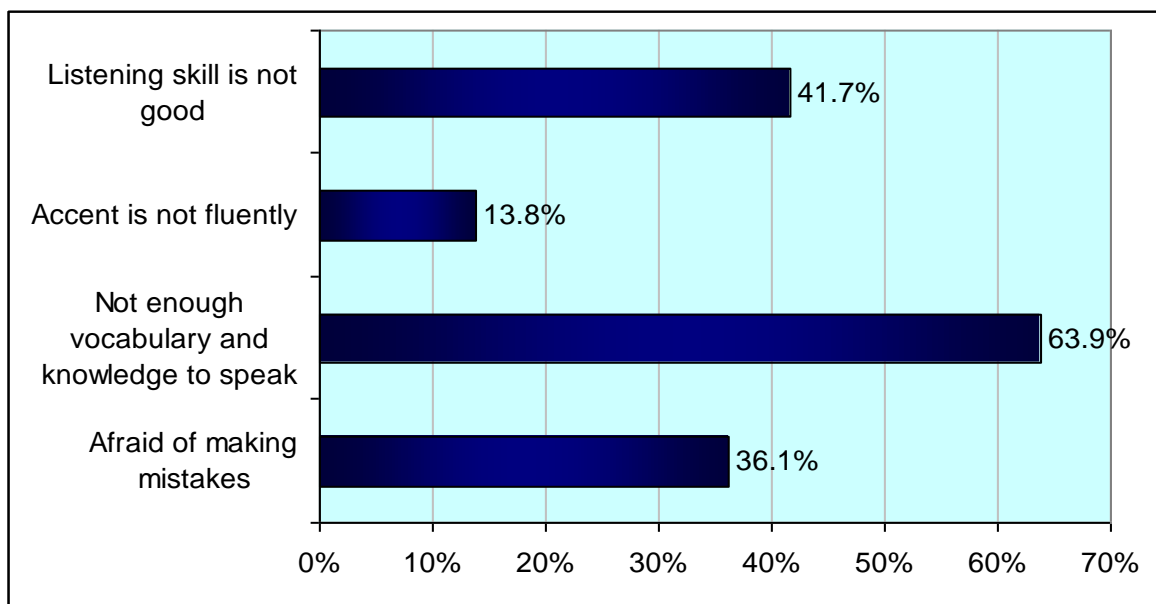


Figure 5. The freshmen's psychological factors when speaking English

Freshmen's attitudes in the learning decide that they could learn English better or worse. If they love English language, they will not have learning difficulties. Confidence is a necessary character; it can help freshmen speak English well. Notwithstanding, most of freshmen were lack of confidence when speaking. They felt shy and anxious when speaking English with other people. The most of reasons were the difficulties mentioned above.

First, more than half of the freshmen (23 freshmen in the total of 36 freshmen) said that they did not enough words to say and knowledge with the rate of 63.9%. Next, a relatively high figure was 41.7% of freshmen were their bad listening skill, so they could not hear what others are saying in order to they reply. Necessary for a successful communication must be a combination of listening and speaking. There were some freshmen (36.1%) shared that they fretted about feeling ashamed when making mistakes in speaking class or they fretted about being laughed by their classmates because their accent was not fluently (13.8% of freshmen).

During the discussion time, teacher joined with them to encourage them many times because they were very shy. Freshmen were silent unless they were invited. Members stood up to answering were usually the group leaders. When answering the questions, most of the freshmen read the words in the paper in their hands. They afraid of everybody know that their speaking skill was not good. If freshmen learn speaking English, they had to have mistakes in speaking. There was no reason to feel ashamed. Freshmen should try to overcome this difficulty and become more active in class.

CONCLUSIONS

English is one of the most common languages in the world. It is very important in communication. However, studying English is not easy. Freshmen had many problems in learning English, especially speaking English. This research was conducted to find the difficulties in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. After analyzing data and information from collected data of questionnaires and paper interviews for students and the observation sheet, the researchers brought out the conclusions for study.

Most of them had the positive attitudes toward speaking English and good purposes when they decided to choose English as their major. However, they often face many difficulties in speaking English such as lack of vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, lack of background knowledge, effect of listening comprehension on speaking and effect of psychological (learners' attitude, motivation and strategies). Most of freshmen rarely had chance to practice speaking English before they learnt English at Tay Do University. They often lack of confidence, feel shy, fear of making mistakes when speaking. In addition, they did not know how to use strategies in learning speaking English.

The factors above were a big problem that made freshmen's speaking ability could worse than they were. In summary, this thesis can help freshmen to recognize their problems in speaking English and then they could improve their speaking skill.

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