



A STUDY ON PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING OF ENGLISH-MAJORED FRESHMEN AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

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Abstract:

In this globalization era, there have been drastic changes taking place all over the world. People's desires are fulfilled when they clearly express their ideas and opinions to others. Thus, they need to learn speaking skills in order to fulfill their ambitions, desires, and goals. However, it is so difficult for students to master this skill because they encounter some common problems when speaking. Therefore, the research entitled "A study on problems in speaking of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University and some suggested solutions" was carried out in order to identify common problems in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University and provide some suggested solutions. In this study, questionnaires and interview papers were used as the main instruments to collect the data. The participants were 80 English-majored freshmen in the two classes of English course 16 including 16A and 16B at Tay Do University. The study's findings revealed that freshmen majoring in English had several common problems with vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, the influence of mother tongue, and psychology in speaking. It is expected that this study will assist English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University in recognizing and overcoming obstacles in the process of speaking.

Keywords: problems, speaking, freshmen

1. Introduction

Language is our primary source of communication. It is the means by which we communicate our ideas and thoughts with others. There are thousands of languages in the world, according to Walija (1996:4) in Wibowo (2014) stated that language is the most

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effective of communication to convey an idea, message, intentions, feelings, and opinion to others. In fact, English is recognized as an official language in 67 countries and 27 non-sovereign entities worldwide. In addition, English is the language extensively used in the field of scientific research, business, education, information and technology, software, entertainment, travel and tourism, media and newspapers, and so on. English is also the most common language of business in Asia. Therefore, English has long been regarded as a necessary foreign language, particularly among the Vietnamese youth.

English is the most significant foreign language for transferring and receiving information in science, technology, art, and culture and for establishing worldwide relationships. In English, listening, speaking, reading and writing are four skills that should be acquired. Speaking is the most crucial of them all. According to Ur (1996, p.120), *“of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important”*. As stated by Richards and Renandya (2002:210) that *“speaking is one of the central elements of communication”*. It signifies that speaking is very important and that anyone can use speech to communicate their feelings, emotions, and ideas. It is most commonly done through face-to-face connection and conversation. People can express themselves and communicate with others via speaking. Richard (2008:19) asserted that the mastery of speaking skills in English is priority for many language learners. In addition, according to Chaney (1998:13), *“speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts”*. From these definitions above, speaking is a complex and very long-term process; hence students should spend much more time practicing by themselves.

In actuality, practically all students are hesitant to speak in English. They are frequently concerned about making a mistake, apprehensive, or simply shy of the attention that their speech draws. This issue can be caused by a variety of factors. The first is that many of them do not have opportunities to develop speaking skills in high school. They are taught using traditional methods, such as the grammar- translate way of teaching English rather than the communicative approach. They also lack the necessary vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to communicate effectively. The researcher discovered several issues with students' language skills, which are caused by both internal and external influences.

As a result of the aforementioned causes, the researcher decided to perform a study entitled *“A study on problems in speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University and some suggested solutions”*. Hopefully, the findings of this study can help students in identifying their problems. Furthermore, if students rely on the problems identified in this study, it will be easier for them to overcome their own speaking obstacles and enhance their speaking skills.

1.2. Research aims and research question

1.2.1. Aim of the study

The purpose of this study is to discover some common problems in English speaking of English majored freshmen at Tay Do University as well as to provide some suggestions

to improve their speaking skills. It also aids students in recognizing their own weakness and choosing the most appropriate methods for improving their speaking skills.

1.2.2. Research question

The research was done to answer these two questions:

- 1) What are some problems that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University encounter when speaking English?
- 2) What are some suggested solutions to help them solve these problems?

1.3. The significance of the research

This thesis was conducted with the purpose of finding out some problems that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University encounter when speaking English. On the basis of the findings, students would gain more insights into their problems in speaking. Particularly, this thesis also would be a useful reference with the suggested solutions which would help English majored students to solve their problems. Then, they can find out effective methods to enhance their speaking skills as well as never meet those problems again.

1.4. The organization

The research is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

2. Literature review

2.1. Definitions of speaking

There are a lot of definitions of speaking that have been suggested by researchers in language learning.

Initially, it is noted that speaking is a productive language skill. It signifies that speaking refers to a person's ability to produce sounds with meaning that can be understood by others, so that they are able to create good communication. In Webster New World Dictionary, speaking is to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995). Besides, in the Oxford Dictionary (2018), speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing one's feelings in speech.

According to Quianthy (1990), speaking as the process of transmitting ideas and information orally in variety of situations. Speaking is a tool to communicate ideas that are arranged and developed accordance with listener's need (Tarigan, 1987, cited in Musaddat, 2008). Furthermore, Ladouse (Nunan, 1991) also shared his viewpoint that

“speaking is described as the activity as the ability to express oneself in the situation, or the activity to report acts, or situation in precise words or the ability to converse or to express a sequence of ideas fluently”. On the other hand, speaking is verbal a language to communicate with others. Its function is to convey message which lies in structure and meaning of all languages, whether it is written or spoken (Fulcher, 2003). From a different point of view, Chaney (1998) emphasized *“speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context”*.

Brown (1994), defined speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Harmer (2007) also shared the same idea *“speaking is the ability to speak fluently and presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language ‘on the spot’”*. As to the arguments of Harmer (2001, p. 271), speaking involves interaction with one or more participants. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. In other words, speaking is a means to persuade others to do something, to clarify unclear things, and to express opinions, feeling etc. On the other hand, Florez (1999) and Abd El Fattah Torky (2006) elaborated speaking as a two-way process including a true communication of opinions, information, or emotions. This top-down view regards the spoken texts as the collaboration between two or more people in the shared time and the shared context. Besides that, speaking is a means by which people are doing the purpose required of the interaction, which may be a conversation, or a task in a context that brings them into a relative degree of status and power (McKay, 2006, p. 179). Moreover, Samira (2014) claimed that *“speaking is the active use of language to express meaning, and for young learners, the spoken language is the medium through which a new language is encountered, understood, practiced, and learnt. Rather than oral skills being simply one aspect of learning language, the spoken form in the young”*.

From the explanation above, the researchers conclude that speaking is what we say in response to what we see, feel, and think. We want someone to hear us when we are feeling something. So, we can describe this process as a two-way interaction.

2.2. The role of speaking

In the present global world, communication is critical to achieving success in all fields. Language is utilized as a communication tool. “Speaking” is described by Wilson (1983:5) as *“the development of the relationship between speaker and listener.”* It implies that the primary goal of speaking is to communicate. Therefore, a language is required to communicate with others who live all around the world. As English is considered the international language and is widely spoken all over the world, it is useful for communicating with people who live in different areas, states, countries, and continents of the world. Speaking is regarded as the most crucial of the four key language skills in learning a foreign or second language. Brown and Yule (1983) stated *“speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations”*.

Speaking English is seen as the key to unlocking a wonderful world for us. The importance of English is more evident as the integration of the world together with the penetration of foreign companies into the Vietnam market. It will be much easier for students to arrange to work with foreign partners in international fields and to grow in their careers if they know English. In addition, for individuals who have not previously worked, speaking English will demonstrate a significant portion of their ability and intelligence, allowing them to easily obtain a decent job with a high income. Furthermore, having the ability to speak English well, people will not feel inferior when facing foreigners instead of expressing it with a reserved attitude. Of course, knowing English will assist people in conversing with others, making friends with coworkers, and teachers who are foreigners. Moreover, English is used frequently in daily life: on product packaging, on the phone, etc. It can be said that this language is ingrained in every aspect of life. Therefore, speaking English is extremely necessary for students to communicate, use foreign products, and make the most of online tools like Google, Facebook, or Twitter. If students want to go abroad to study or work, English is a prerequisite because it is the language, they will be able to communicate. Besides, students who have a strong English background will be more successful and able to solve problems more quickly. For example, many young people study abroad in Europe and graduate with good qualifications and especially with very good English, so they can be hired as managers or high-ranking positions within the company, or they can work for foreign corporations abroad.

In short, speaking skills play a vital role as everything depends on the way how people communicate their messages with others.

2.3. Some problems in speaking English

Obviously, anyone learning a new language confronts some issues. In learning English as a foreign language, it is difficult to be a great learner in four core skills, notably speaking skills. This section discusses issues in speaking English including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, the influence of the mother tongue on speaking English, and psychology.

2.3.1. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to English language learning because without vocabulary, learners cannot understand others or express their own ideas. According to Zimmerman cited in Coady and Huckin (1998), vocabulary is central to language and critical importance to the typical language learning. Ur (1998) said that: *"Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language"*. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than just a single word. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary "items" rather than "words." In addition, Burns (1972) also defined vocabulary as *"the stock of words which is used by a person, class or profession"*. Based on the definitions above, vocabulary is defined as the total number of words required to

transmit ideas and express the speaker's meaning. That is why learning vocabulary in speaking is important.

Many people believe that there are more than a million words in the English language. In reality, during a project looking at words in digitised books, researchers from Harvard University and Google in 2010, they estimated that a total of 1,022,000 words and that the number would grow by several thousand per year. Therefore, many students struggle to express their ideas due to lack of vocabulary. Balqis (2018) further stated that the learners who have a lack of vocabulary cannot express their concepts as clearly, fluently as they want, and also, they cannot understand the books which are written in English. Despite the fact that many students begin learning English from primary school to college or university, their vocabulary remains limited. In fact, the English-majored freshmen still have a lot of limitations in communication when speaking English only with simple words.

Another common mistake listed is that the students frequently use vocabulary that is inappropriate in the context. Schewertly (2012) indicated that *"choosing appropriate vocabulary is an important aspect of any presentation. Lacking vocabulary knowledge will become a challenge to choose the correct words. If the words used to be not in rules, they will make a misunderstanding to the audiences."* For instance: *"Measures should be taken to reduce climate change."* The word "reduce" in this sentence cannot be replaced by "decrease" even though both words are synonyms. "Decrease" is often used to refer to making a quantity smaller, while "reduce" can be used to describe bringing down the quantity, size, quality, value, and extent. It is quite easy for native speakers to misunderstand if it is utilized incorrectly.

In brief, vocabulary is one of the weaknesses of students in speaking English. Furthermore, it is easy for misunderstandings to occur during the information exchange process. Only when having a great vocabulary can we make progress in developing four skills. In speaking, it is a decisive factor to make us talk with others actively and understand others quickly. David Wilkins argued that: *"without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed."* etc.

2.3.2. Grammar

Vocabulary is really important but it is not enough for speaking. Hetrkul (1995) said that grammar was also very important for students when learning speaking skills. If they want to master English, it is necessary for them to use grammar appropriately so that they can produce meaningful sentences. Different scholars and different linguists described grammar in their own ways. One of definitions of grammar is in Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar is, the whole system of a language, including its morphology, syntax, phonology and semantics (Chalker & Weiner, 1994). In linguistics, the grammar of a natural language is its set of structural constraints on speakers' or writers' composition of clauses, phrases, and words. The term can also refer to the study of such constraints, a field that includes domains such as phonology, morphology, and syntax, often complemented by phonetics, semantics, and pragmatics. Grammar is also

the rules of words and how words are combined in a language. A famous dictionary of The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English delineates the word grammar as the rules of language by which words changed their formation and then combined into sentences. Brumfit and Johnson (1979) mentioned that there existed in no language that is without grammar and he also expounds on the significance of grammar by saying that without the appropriate knowledge of grammar of a language, millions of the language words become impractical because these cannot be put into comprehensive and meaningful orders without grammar. Therefore, it is undeniable that grammar plays an important role in speaking.

However, using two languages well at the same time is difficult due to the differences in grammatical structures between Vietnamese and English. Mostly, when speaking English, students often faced grammatical problems in tenses, active-passive voice and prepositions. They have a hard time distinguishing between past, present, and future tense usage. For instance, "I have studied English for seven years." The tense of the verb in this example is the present perfect tense, it shows an action that happened in the past and up to now or in the future. However, there are no rules of using the different verb forms to express the time when an action happens in Vietnamese.

In conclusion, grammatical structures in English are so complicated and not easy to master. In terms of motivation and learner success with language, grammar has been seen to be a problem to stand in the way of helping learners to become successful speakers.

2.3.3. Pronunciation, intonation and accent

Pronunciation is one of the most important things that students have to master in order to communicate appropriately and fluently. According to Cook (1996 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016) pronunciation as the production of English sounds. In addition, pronunciation is the production of a sound system which does not interfere with communication either from the speakers' or the listeners' viewpoint (Paulston & Burder, 1976). Otlowski (1998) stated that pronunciation is the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner. Furthermore, Richard and Schmidt (2002) defined pronunciation as the method of producing certain sounds. According to Yates (2002 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016), pronunciation is the production of sounds that is used for making meaning. Yates and Zielinski (2009) also indicated that pronunciation has a key role in learning English. According to Fangzhi (1998:39), that it is important to pay attention to pronunciation since it results in whether or not someone's message can be passed or not by other people. Moreover, Gilbert (cited in Otlowsky, 2004:3) stated that if someone cannot hear English well, she or he is cut off from the language. And if someone cannot be understood easily, she or he is cut off from conversation with native speakers. We can conclude from the statements above that pronunciation gives a significant effect to the meaning of what someone says.

Making mistakes in pronunciation is unavoidable when learning any language, especially for beginning English learners. Organs of speech have also been matured up

according to his/her language since birth. As a result, learning a second language or a foreign language, particularly speaking correctly, is always a challenge. Because pronunciation is more complicated than listening, many students believe that standardized English pronunciation is the most difficult skill in speaking. There are three reasons why students have problems with pronunciation. Firstly, the English sound contains various sounds that are unfamiliar to Vietnamese students. Secondly, the way native speakers pronounce the ending sounds is completely different from the one deeply rooted in Vietnamese students, making it more difficult for them to acquire proper English pronunciation. Finally, Vietnamese is a monosyllabic, tonal language that often causes the students to speak English without the correct intonation, rhythm, or stress since they imitate the patterns of their mother tongue. As a result, it has been stated that Vietnamese students make phonemic mistakes, resulting in incomprehensible English pronunciation.

Consonants in English are classified as voiced and voiceless. Many students struggle with pronunciation because they cannot distinguish between voiced and voiceless sounds. For example, students might substitute “p” for “b” or “t” for “d”. These sounds are easily confused because their only difference is whether or not students use their voices to produce them. If they are not careful, they may mispronounce words like ‘tuck’ for ‘duck’ or ‘pen’ for ‘ben.’ Similarly, several English consonants are unlikely to exist in Vietnamese, therefore students are unfamiliar with pronouncing these sounds in English, such as /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /f/.

Another problem is missing the ending sound, for instance, /k/ in luck, /θ/ in width. Furthermore, most Vietnamese students miss or find it difficult to pronounce the ending sounds of /s/ and /z/, causing students’ speech to be unclear and sometimes misconstrued. Students often pronounce the /s/ sound when they see words that end in the letter s, however, this is not always the case, such as when the ‘s’ in “books” sounds /s/ but sound /z/ in “bags.”

One more common problem that makes students confused when speaking English is not paying attention to word stress, phrase stress (rhythm), and not using intonation when they speak. Vietnamese is a tonal language, which meant that each word has a mark to differentiate it from other words like “ma”, “má”, “mà”, “mã”, and “mạ”. On the other hand, English is a toneless language. Students have to use rhythm or intonation to express their meaning, attitude, and feelings when speaking. Misuse or omission of rhythm/intonation might cause the audience to misunderstand what the speaker is trying to convey. Some cases of error or lack of stress change the meaning of words. For example, the word “reject” can be stressed in two different ways. If the stress is on the first syllable/riːdʒekt/, the word “reject” is interpreted as a noun (cast-off). In contrast, the word “reject” is regarded as a verb (refuse) as the stress falls on the second syllable /rɪˈdʒekt/.

To sum up, the complexities of the sounds system, ending sounds, and stress cause a slew of difficulties for Vietnamese students. As a result, when speaking in English, Vietnamese students frequently have problems pronouncing English.

2.3.2. Background knowledge

Background knowledge (or prior knowledge) makes it easier to learn new things. When we learn, we connect new learning to what we already have in our brains, forming something like a bridge between the old and the new. In other words, background knowledge is all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge (Campbell, 1948). For a definition, it can be referred that background knowledge includes learners' linguistic knowledge, world knowledge, and understanding about the context. Background knowledge may be acquired when they are entering the situation, and through their past experience. It is very important for English learners. Thus, if students have immense knowledge on many fields, it is easier for them to apply their knowledge to listening texts. On the other hand, if they lack knowledge for understanding what they heard, they will be confused by new words and phrases. In short, background knowledge strongly affects the way in which listeners interpret and understand a message when listening. In addition, successful comprehension in listening takes place when the listener has schematic knowledge, knowledge of the context and systemic knowledge (Anderson & Lynch, 2000).

2.3.4. The influence of mother tongue on speaking English

According to Al Asmari (2014), "*a mother tongue is a system of meaningful signs. When people want to express and understand something, they are able to access information automatically*". Mother tongue is defined by Ashworth (1992) as the language a child learns in the early years of life and later turns into the means of thought and communication of the child. Ojo (2005) defined mother tongue as the first language that a child picks up in his/her childhood. Yazici & Glover (2010) also stated that "*children acquire their mother tongue at home and school as well as in social situations outside the home*". Their parents and close relatives initially assisted them in learning their mother tongue. A person can have better and deep understanding, new findings or ideas, appreciation and extension and expansion of ideas only if he or she can understand the subject by understanding through the mother tongue (Awopetu, 2016). Harmer (2001) suggested some reasons why students use mother tongue in class. Firstly, when the students are asked to have a discussion about a topic that they are incapable of performing, they will use their own language. Another reason is that "*the use of mother tongue is a natural thing to do.*" When the teachers do not encourage the students to use a foreign language, they will use their first language to explain something to another. Therefore, most students faced problems with their mother tongue when speaking English as the second language.

Students have difficulty learning English sounds because Vietnamese has some sounds also found in English but not as independent phonemes. For example, the sound /l/ exists in both Vietnamese and English. The difference is that the sound /l/ in Vietnamese does not make any difference in meaning. But in English, there are distinctions between the short /l/ and long /l:/ sounds, as in the words "sheep" /ʃi:p/ and "ship" /ʃɪp/. Moreover, both vowels and consonants, such as the vowels /æ /and /aʊ/ and consonants /ð/, /θ/ are examples of English sounds that do not exist in Vietnamese. These

sounds may cause students to find similar sounds in their mother tongue and replace the sounds they are unfamiliar with. As Machey (1965) said that when learning a foreign language, if the learner already knows his mother tongue, he usually attempts to transfer his mother tongue to the new language. Some typical examples will be the replacement for the English sound /ð/ with /d/ and /æ/ with /ai/. In addition, Vietnamese is a monophonic language, which meant each Vietnamese word is a syllable in pronunciation. For example, in the sentence “Tôi là một giáo viên”, they will utter each word clearly “Tôi” “là” “một” “giáo” “viên”. In contrast, English is a polyphonic language. This meant that many words are composed of multiple syllables. For instance, “I am a teacher / aɪ æm ə 'ti:tʃə/”. The two sentences above have the same meaning, however, each word in a Vietnamese sentence is a separate syllable, the noun “giáo viên” is likewise uttered as two separate words. While in English, “teacher” is a single word with two syllables connected together. To summarize, many people have the habit of speaking English as speaking Vietnamese, which means that English words with several syllables are also broken down into separate sounds, all of which are derived from the mother tongue. Furthermore, students often translate Vietnamese into English before speaking, and native speakers may not always clear about what the students are saying, resulting in misunderstanding. Therefore, the impact of the mother tongue on speaking English is very obvious.

2.3.5. Psychology

According to Braine G. (2005), psychology is the number one key to success for most EFL students in their English-speaking performance. Although students have studied English for many years from primary school to high school, college and university, they still face psychological barriers when speaking English. This study will show the psychological problems of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University when speaking English including shyness, lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and lack of motivation.

2.3.5.1. Shyness

Shyness is one of the biggest factors that prevent English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University from speaking English. Shyness is the tendency to feel awkward, worried, or tense during social encounters, especially with unfamiliar people. Severely shy people may have physical symptoms like blushing, sweating, a pounding heart or upset stomach; negative feelings about themselves; worries about how others view them; and a tendency to withdraw from social interactions. Shyness is identified as an emotional thing that many students suffer from at times when they are required to speak English. This suggests that shyness could be a cause of difficulty in students' activities, particularly when it comes to speaking English. Saurik (2011) indentified that most of English students feel shy when they speak the language because they think they will make mistakes when they talk. Baldwin (2011) further explained that speaking in front of people is one of the more common phobias that students encounter and feeling of shyness makes their mind go blank or that they will forget what to say. Many students

struggle when they are required to speak in English class because they are afraid of unfavorable reactions, ridicule, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, humiliation, lack of ability, criticism, or rejection. In terms of the cause of shyness, Bowen (2005) and Robby (2010) argued that some shy learners are caused by their nature that they are very quiet. They think that they are being closely observed by other people and they would like to give a good impression. At the same time, they may fear that they are not as good as other people and cannot come up to the mark. The findings of this study prove that speaking in front of others is one of the most common problems that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University faced. Their failure to demonstrate their speaking ability is frequently influenced by their shyness. To put it another way, shyness plays an important role in speaking the student's success.

2.3.5.2. Lack of confidence

Most Vietnamese English learners suffer from a lack of confidence in speaking English, especially English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University. It is commonly understood that students' lack of confidence usually occurs when students realize that 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 are talking showing that the students are lack of confidence to communicate. Nunan (1999) said that "*students who lack of confidence about themselves and their English necessarily suffer from communication apprehension*". In addition, the communication environment in Vietnamese schools is often not focused. Because there is very little practice in class, many students develop a psychology of lack of confidence and fear of communicating in English. They learn the English language but they do not speak it. This is one of the problems that most students encounter in the classroom or in public. They are embarrassed, stressed and fear ridiculed by other people every time they speak English. According to Chen (2010) "*the main cause of students' confidence is their low ability in speaking English.*" Lacking confidence in speaking will affect students' performance. It may have an impact on oral language output, causing people's ability to speak not as smoothly as in reality. If students do not believe in themselves, they will struggle to communicate in English. MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (as cited in Hysook and Adam R. Lee, 2004) suggested that self-confidence significantly contributes to the learner's willingness to communicate in a foreign language. Therefore, confidence plays a very important role in speaking English.

2.3.5.3. Fear of mistake

One of the biggest problems preventing students from speaking English is their fear of making mistakes. Fear of making mistakes is one of the major factors in students' failure to communicate in English. The fundamental cause of mistake fear is that "*students are afraid of looking foolish in front of other people and they are concerned about how others will see them*" (Kurtus, 2001). In addition, Hieu (2011) and Zang (2006) cited in He and Chen (2010) explain that students feel afraid of the idea of making mistakes as they are worried that their friends will laugh at them and receive negative evaluations from their peers if

they make mistake in speaking English. As argued by Middleton (2009), most EFL students are afraid to try and to speak in a foreign language they learn. In certain circumstances, they also worry about how they will sound and are scared of sounding silly, and so on. In teaching speaking skill, when teachers ask students to express themselves in front of their classmates this leads them to express the stress in speaking and it even stops them from practicing confidently. Fear of making mistakes could originate from a classroom condition in which students have varying abilities. There are two types of students: good and not-good. The good students often dominate the slow and not-good ones. The not-good students typically avoid speaking in front of the good ones, which leads to their silence during the whole class activity. Students are worried that if they make mistakes in speaking English, their friends will laugh at them and receive negative evaluations from their classmates and teachers. Besides that, some students aspire to be language perfectionists, so they can easily blame themselves if they speak something wrong in front of others. The fear of making mistakes is the problem, which is related to the problem of correction and negative reviews. So, it is critical for students to consider making mistakes is neither wrong nor bad because they can learn from their mistakes. Even when they were incorrect, they had the courage to speak up. They will learn from their mistakes and improve when they speak.

2.3.5.4 Lack of motivation

Motivation is regarded as the desire of the students in learning a language. According to Ortega (2009), *"it is not enough when the students just have the desire to learn the language, the students also need to provide a great effort to reach their goal."* Many students aspire to be fluent in English. They establish great goals for themselves and feel very determined to conquer English. However, after only one month, one week, one day, or even sitting at a desk for 30 minutes, they become disheartened and lose the ambition to continue learning because of lack of motivation. Nunan (1999) (cited in Gardner) added that *"the causes of the students lack of motivation e.g. uninspired teaching, boredom, lack of perceived relevance of materials and lack of knowledge about the goals of the instructional program."* With regard to the issue of motivation in learning, Songsiri (2007) stated that *"motivation is a key to students' learning success."* In this regard, motivation is a key consideration in deciding whether or not students are ready to communicate. Lightbrown & Spada (2001) suggested, *"in learning second language, motivation can be divided into two factors, they are communicative needs of the students and their attitudes towards the language community."* In this case, students will be motivated in learning English because they will need to learn and express it on a broad scale in order to support their future career goals. Zua (2008) further added that *"motivation is an inner energy."* She said that no matter what kinds of motivation the learners possess it will enhance their study interest. Nunan (1999) has stated that motivation can easily influence the students' reluctance to speak in English. In this sense, motivation is scrutinized as an essential factor that leads to successful communication. Several studies have indicated that students who have a strong motivation to succeed will continue in learning and achieve higher scores than those with

weaker motivation for success. But many students do not apply motivation effectively when speaking English. It leads them to feel depressed, to have no ambition to talk, as well as to develop their skills.

In summary, based on this part, it can be concluded that students do face problems during the speaking process. Those problems are categorized into several groups namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, the influence of mother tongue on speaking English, and psychology (shyness, lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and lack of motivation). From these problems, the researcher will give some suggested solutions to help students improve their English-speaking skills.

2.4. Some suggested solutions

There are many factors that might cause the students' low proficiency in English and one of them belongs to motivation. This is because learners' motivation has been widely accepted as a key factor which influences the rate and success of second/foreign language learning (MacDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994). In addition, MacDonough (1983, p.142) states that "*motivation of the students is one of the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning the language*". Motivation is such a complex phenomenon that it cannot be defined by a single widely accepted theory. This is because the term motivation has been viewed differently by different schools of thought. From the behavioristic perspective, motivation is "*quite simply, the anticipation of reward*" (Brown, 2000, p. 160). Presumably, it can mean different things and it may be affected by: (a) cause, related to personal goals of the learner or outside incentives such as rewards or punishment; (b) behavior, which relates to persistence, effort of the learner or enjoyment; (c) outcomes, referring to evaluation of performance and reaction to success or failure (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009). Furthermore, another study also states that "*learners are motivated if they need to learn the language in order to achieve a goal or if they want to communicate with speakers of the target language and learn about the country where the language is spoken*" (Nakanishi T, 2002). It makes sense that individuals who are seriously motivated will certainly learn a foreign language, particularly English listening, faster and more efficiently; if one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the goal, enjoys the activities, and so on (Gardner, 2006, p. 243).

Another factor is learners' attitudes. Like motivation, attitudes include "*the projecting of learners' perspective towards something*" (Gardner, 2006). In addition, Gardner and Lambert (1972, p.3) state that his (the learner) motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes towards the other group in particular and by his orientation towards the learning task itself. According to the Oxford Dictionary, attitude means the way of thinking and feeling about something or somebody. More specifically, R. Aiken states that attitudes are "*tendencies to evaluate an entity with some degree of favor or disfavor, ordinarily expressed in cognitive, affective and behavioral responses.*" Entity refers to the object of an attitude and includes various things like individuals, inanimate objects, concepts, social groups, behaviors, etc. One more notable thing is that attitudes are related strongly

to motivation; it is evident that people with a negative attitude towards a language could not be motivated learners, and there is evidence to support the correlation between a positive attitude about a language and high achievement (Wilhelm, 1999). Learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages (Starks & Paltridge, 1996). Karahan (2007, p.84) avers that “*positive language attitudes let learners have positive orientation towards learning English*”. As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as well as in English listening, as they would appear to influence students’ success or failure in their learning.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

The research was carried out to answer the research questions stated in chapter 1. The participants were 80 English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University. They were delivered the questionnaires so as to investigate their opinions on problems in speaking English. Also, to make the research more reliable, 20 students were randomly selected to answer the interview paper. Finally, the collected information of these two instruments were analyzed to show the problems in speaking English. This study was a combination of quantitative research and qualitative one because its instruments consisted of a questionnaire and an interview paper.

3.2. Participants

The research was undertaken with the participation of 80 English-majored freshmen in English course 16 from 2 English classes 16A and 16B at Tay Do University. They were 25 males and 55 females. Generally, the participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 years old. All of them speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue and English is considered as their foreign language. In addition, they come from both rural and urban areas and they have learned English for at least two years. However, most of them have learned English speaking skills for the first year, so it can be said that they have to face many problems in speaking English when entering Tay Do University. When this research was carried out, they were studying English speaking with the coursebook *Speak Now 1*. They were given questionnaires and interview papers focusing on their problems in speaking English to collect the data for the research.

3.3. Instrument

To achieve the goals of the thesis, questionnaires and interview papers were two main instruments that were used to collect the participants' opinions. The questionnaire was used to gather students' background information and survey the problems causing obstacles in students' English-speaking skills. The reason why the researcher used the questionnaire was that it provided a relatively cheap, quick, and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people (Saul McLeod,

2014). The interview paper is also designed to get detailed information about their problems clearly.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as the most effective instrument because large amounts of information could be collected from a huge number of people in a short period of time. In the research, the questionnaire consisted of 35 questions in total and was divided into two parts described as follows.

Part 1 embraced 5 questions (numbered from one to five) which investigated the students' background of speaking. In this part, the participants were required to choose the most appropriate answer. Especially for question 4, they would give their specific answers.

Part 2 was 30 statements (numbered from six to thirty-five) illustrated in a table with the 5-degree Likert-type scale including strongly agree, agree, no idea, disagree and strongly disagree. Students could tick on the relevant column next to each statement provided. In general, the questionnaire was classified into the following sections:

Questions / Statements	Summary of the question's / Statement's content
a. Question 1 to 5	Student's background of speaking
b. Statement 6 to 10	Student's problems in vocabulary
c. Statement 11 to 15	Student's problems in pronunciation
d. Statement 16 to 20	Student's problems in grammar
e. Statement 21 to 25	Student's problems in the influence of mother tongue
f. Statement 26 to 30	Student's problems of psychology
g. Statement 30 to 35	Suggested solutions for speaking improvement

3.3.2 Interview

The purpose of the interview paper was to elicit detailed information from freshmen regarding their speaking problems and potential solutions. The interview papers were handed to 20 English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University who were chosen at random from various classes. It was made up of three questions. In the first question, the researcher would like to be aware of participants' opinions about speaking skills when learning a foreign language. The second question was designed to point out problems that participants have been struggling with while speaking. The interviewees were asked to share the solutions they used to overcome their problems as the last question of the interview paper.

3.4. Data analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher examined and enumerated the data from the questionnaires. As regards data from the interviews, the researcher read the answers carefully and identified the main points related to the purpose of the research questions. All the collected data were calculated as a percentage by using Excel.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The study's final results were depicted in this section. The findings were shown in order to analyze the data collected from all of the participants in Chapter 3. The results comprised two sections, namely the results from the questionnaire and the results from the interview.

Thanks to the questionnaires, a great deal of valuable and reliable information was got from participants. The results from questionnaires were separated into two parts, embracing students' background and students' problems in speaking English.

4.1.1. Results from questionnaire

A. Students' vocabulary problems in speaking English

Table 1 below includes 5 statements in total that indicate the respondents' first problems with vocabulary.

Table 1: Students' vocabulary problem in speaking English

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Vocabulary					
6. Because of lacking vocabulary, you cannot express your ideas easily.	38.75%	41.25%	16.25%	3.75%	0%
7. You only use simple words to express your ideas when you speak.	36.25%	46.25%	13.75%	2.5%	1.25%
8. You rarely use idioms and phrasal verbs.	36.25%	43.75%	18.75%	1.25%	0%
9. When you speak, you frequently use vocabulary that is inappropriate in the context	31.25%	45%	16.25%	0%	7.5%
10. It is difficult to express yourself when you are trying to remember unfamiliar words.	32.5%	48.75%	15%	3.75%	0%

The data in the chart revealed that many students had problems with vocabulary because the number of participants picked "Strongly agree" and "Agree" in 5 statements. Concretely, roughly 80% of the respondents (38.75% (31/80) of them strongly agreed and 41.25% (33/80) agreed) believed that because of lacking vocabulary, they could not express their ideas easily, while 3.75% (3/80) of students "disagree". The residual with 16.25% (13/80) had no idea. Similar to statement 6, there were over 82% participants (36.25% (29/80) chose "agree" and 46.25% (37/80) chose "strongly agree") who agreed with statement 7 was also higher than the other ones 2.5% (2/80) disagreed and 1.25% (1/80) strongly disagreed. The rest of them 13.75% (11/80) had no idea.

Moving to statement 8, only 1.25% (1/80) of students showed "disagree" to the opinion they rarely used idioms and phrasal verbs. The remainders 18.75% (15/80) were caught in the middle. In contrast, the majority of freshmen 36.25% (29/80) "strongly agree" and 43.75% (35/80) "agree") affirmed that they rarely used idioms and phrasal verbs.

The next one was statement 9 whose results revealed that approval was given by more than two-thirds of respondents. To be more specific, 31.25% (31/80) gave strong agreement and 45% (36/80) showed their concurrence. By contrast, only 6 students (7.5%) gave "strongly disagree" whilst 16.25% of students (13/80) had no comment on this matter.

Lastly, "It is difficult to express yourself when you are trying to remember unfamiliar words", 48.75% (39/80) of students agreed and 32.5% (26/80) of them entirely concurred. Meanwhile, 15% of participants (12/80) showed hesitation and more than 3.75% (3/80) of them gave disagreed

Based on the statistics presented above, there was no debate that problems relevant to vocabulary definitely held students back from the process of speaking English.

B. Students' grammar problem in speaking English

Continuing with students' problems related to grammar, Table 2 consists of 5 statements.

Table 1. Students' grammar problem in speaking English

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Grammar					
11. Too many grammatical structures make you feel confused and do not know how to use the grammar taught in your speech.	48.75%	37.5%	10%	3.75%	0%
12. You cannot remember all of the grammatical rules.	43.75%	42.5%	10%	3.75%	0%
13. You usually apply Vietnamese structures to English structures to speak.	31.25%	43.75%	16.25%	6.25%	2.5%
14. You do not know how to use grammatical structures properly in certain contexts.	35%	40%	16.25%	8.75%	0%
15. You have a hard time distinguishing between past, present, and future tense usage.	23.75%	45%	16.25%	15%	0%

To begin with, let's take a close look at statement 11. Over 85% of students embraced 48.75% (39/80) strongly agreed and 37.5% (30/80) agreed with the statement. Conversely, over 3% (3/80) of participants disagreed too many grammatical structures make them feel confused and do not know how to use the grammar taught in their speech. This meant that they did not face grammar problems when speaking. And the rest of the participants 8/80 (10%) had no idea about this problem.

Relation to statement 12 in the table, more than half of the students agreed that they could not remember all of the grammatical rules. Specifically, 68 students, 34 students (43.75%) chose “strongly agree” and the rest (42.5%) showed their concurrence. On the contrary, making up 3 remainders (3.75%) disagreed of this statement. Along with them, there were 8 participants (10%) having no opinions about the statement. The results showed that most students could not remember all the grammatical structures they have learned in school.

For statement 13's result, the ones giving disagreement were slightly up to 5 students (6.25%) and 2 students (2.5%) chose “strongly disagree”; however, the ones having no ideas with 13 students (16.25%). Besides, 31.25% (27/80) of participants completely consented, and 43.75% (35/80) of them assented to the statement.

Now turning to the two last statements in table 2, statement 14 and statement 15 were a coincidence the responders had no comment in these two statements were absolutely the same with 13 responders in each one, tantamount to 16.25%. In statement 14, the proportion of the ones picking "strongly agree" was 35% (28/80) and 40% (32/80) was the percentage of students showing their agreement. Meanwhile, a number of students 8.75% (7/80) expressed disagreement with the statement. Down to statement 15, more than 66%, successively 23.75% (19/80) and 45% (36/80) of students completely concurred and approved the statement "You have a hard time distinguishing between past, present, and future tense usage". Otherwise, 12 freshmen (15%) identified that they had no problems in distinguishing between past, present, and future tense usage.

As a whole, from these five statements’ findings, it could be inferred that most of the students had problems with grammar when speaking English.

C. Students’ pronunciation problem in speaking English Along with vocabulary and grammar obstacles, pronunciation also bars the students’ speaking skills. This part had 5 statements (numbered 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20).

Table 2. Students’ pronunciation problems in speaking English

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Pronunciation					
16. It is not easy for you to pronounce correctly the ending sounds /s/ and /z/.	38.75%	35%	18.75%	5%	2.5%
17. The way native speakers pronounce ending sounds is completely different from Vietnamese people, making it difficult for you to pronounce English correctly	42.5%	40%	13.75%	3.75%	0%
18. Because those sounds /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /f/ do not exist in Vietnamese, you have problems when pronouncing these sounds in English.	28.75%	45%	18.75%	7.5%	0%

19. Because you imitate the intonation of Vietnamese, you speak English without the correct intonation, rhythm, or stress in English	38.75%	41.25%	13.75%	6.25%	0%
20. You often misuse rhythm/intonation, which makes the audience misunderstand what you are trying to convey	27.5%	38.75%	21.25%	8.75%	3.75%

From the responses from Table 3, in statement 18, more than two-thirds (73.75%) of respondents concurred that it was not easy for them to pronounce correctly the ending sounds /s/ and /z/ (35% (28/80) of them agreed and 38.75% (33/80) strongly agreed). The remaining comprised 18.75% (15/80), 5% (4/80), and 2.5% (2/80) of freshmen delivering no comments, disagreeing and totally disagreeing with this statement, enumerated in sequence.

The next statement, “the way native speakers pronounce ending sounds is completely different from Vietnamese people, making it difficult for you to pronounce English correctly” included 82.5% (66/80) of them who agreed with this statement. To be specific, 40% (32/80) showed consensus and 42.5% (34/80) gave strong agreement. Besides, 13.75% (11/80) had no idea. However, some other participants expressed disagreement with this statement accounting for 3.75% (3/80).

In statement 18, the students who had no idea followed at 18.75% (15/80) and 7.5% (6/80) disagreed. Nearly 75% of them (28.75% (23/80) strongly agreed and 45% (36/80) agreed) shared that because those sounds /θ/, /ð/, /z/, /f/ did not exist in Vietnamese, they had problems when pronouncing these sounds in English.

Moving on to statement 19, 55% of the respondents (38.75% (31/80) and 41.25% (33/80)) found that “Because you imitate the intonation of Vietnamese, you speak English without the correct intonation, rhythm, or stress in English”. Nevertheless, 5 participants (6.25%) did not think so and 13.75% (11/80) did not respond either way.

For the last statement in table 3 (numbered 20) when asking the participants about the idea "You often misuse rhythm/intonation, which makes the audience misunderstand what you are trying to convey", over 66% of students consented to the supposition mentioned above (the combination of 27.5% (25/80) strongly agreements and 38.85% (31/80) agreements). Conversely, making up 8.75% (7/80) of students disagreed and 3.75% (3/80) strongly disagreed with the statement. Besides, the ones staying in the middle were significantly up to 21.25% (17/80).

The statistics in Table 3 showed that the majority of students struggled with pronunciation. It is thought that the differences in sounds between English and Vietnamese were the reason for students' pronunciation difficulties. For that reason, the survey question on the influence of mother tongue on the English-speaking process of freshmen is presented in Table 4.

D. The influence of mother tongue on speaking English

As can be observed from question 21 to question 25 in the table below, it is easily seen that English majored freshmen faced many difficulties in speaking, especially the influence of mother tongue.

Table 3: The influence of mother tongue on speaking English

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
The Influence of Mother Tongue on Speaking English					
21. You often use your mother tongue in class to communicate with your friends.	32.5%	40%	16.25%	8.75%	2.5%
22. The influence of your mother tongue makes it difficult for you to speak.	22.5%	52.5%	10%	15%	0%
23. You have often translated Vietnamese into English before speaking.	26.25%	46.25%	20%	1.25%	6.25%
24. You often replace the sounds in English with similar Vietnamese sounds. Example the replacement for the English sounds /ð/ with /d/ and /æ/ with /ai/ in Vietnamese.	35%	40%	17.5%	7.5%	0%
25. You have the habit of speaking English as speaking Vietnamese, which means that English words with several syllables are also broken down into separate sounds	36.25%	47.5%	8.5%	7.5%	0%

Based on the responses of the students, 75% of participants, particularly 26 of them (32.5%) utterly approved and 32/80 (40%) of freshmen gave agreement toward the fact that they often used their mother tongue in class to communicate with their friends. The remaining was made up of 16.25% (13/80) having no idea. Nonetheless, 8.75% (7/80) of participants disapproved and 2.5% (2/80) of them entirely disapproved of this statement. In statement 22, 75% of students also realized that the influence of mother tongue made it difficult for them to speak (22.5% (18/80) of them strong concurrence and 52.5% (42/80) concurrence); however, 15% (12/80) of them did not think so, and 8 students (10%) had no idea.

The next one was statement 23, only 1 student (1.25%) disagreed and 5 students (6.25%) strongly disagreed with "You have often translated Vietnamese into English before speaking." By contrast, 46.25% (37/80) of students agreed and 26.25% (26/80) of them entirely concurred, and 16 of them gave no comment accounting for 20%.

Continuing with the last two statements, namely statement 24 and statement 25. In statement 24, "you often replace the sounds in English with similar Vietnamese sounds. Example, the replacement for the English sounds /ð/ with /d/ and /æ/ with /ai/ in Vietnamese", there were 40% (28/80) of participants choosing "agree" and 35% (32/80) of

the total chose “strongly agree”. Along with them, 17.5% (14/80) of students gave no comment and only 6 respondents (7.5%) disagreed with the statement. For the last statement, there were only 6 students (7.5%) who disapproved that they had the habit of speaking English as speaking Vietnamese, which meant that English words with several syllables were also broken down into separate sounds. Nonetheless, in succession, the majority of responders 36.25% (29/80) and 47.5% (38/80) gave "strongly agree" and "agree" with this statement. Besides, the rest (8.75%) were in neutral state.

To sum up, most of the students still found that the mother tongue had an influence on their English-speaking skills.

E. Students’ psychological problems in speaking English

Table 5 involves five statements. They indicate psychological problems that freshmen have faced during the process of speaking.

Table 4: Students’ psychological problems in speaking English

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Psychology					
26. You are afraid of making mistakes and lacking confidence in front of your classmates when speaking.	31.25%	40%	23.75%	5%	0%
27. It is hard to react quickly when speaking in class. Because you rarely communicate in English in crowded places.	28.75%	41.25%	23.75%	6.25%	0%
28. You are afraid of being criticized or laughed at by your friends because you do not speak English smoothly.	22.5%	48.75%	22.5%	6.25%	0%
29. You often feel shy whenever you speak.	20%	48.75%	15%	12.5%	3.75%
30. Because of lacking motivation, you do not want to spend much time practicing speaking skills	23.75%	41.25%	18.75%	11.25%	5%

First of all, for statement 26, more than half of the respondents admitted that they were afraid of making mistakes and lacking confidence in front of their classmates when speaking. In particular, 31.25% (25/80) for “strongly agree” and 40% (32/80) for “agree”. However, 19 participants (23.75%) performed in hesitation and there were 4 students (5%) chose “disagree”.

Moving to statement 27, it could be apparently seen that there were only 6.25% (5/80) of students disagreeing toward it was hard to react quickly when speaking in class. Because they rarely communicated in English in crowded places. Conversely, most of the participants 28,75% (23/80) and 41.25% (33/80) entirely consented and assented to this statement, respectively. Meanwhile, the rest of them 23.75% (19/80) had no comment.

Concerning statement 28's results, 18 students (22.5%) indicated their strong agreement and 39 remainders (48.75%) exposed their agreement. The ultimate results pointed out that students found problems speaking in crowded. Meantime, 22.5% (18/80) of participants showed hesitation, and 5 respondents (6.25%) gave their disapproval.

In statement 29, the proportion of the ones choosing "agree" was 48.75% (39/80) and 20% (16/80) was the percentage of students showing their agreement. There were 12 participants (15%) having no idea and 16,25% of responders showed their disagreement (the combination of 12.5% (10/80) "disagree" and 3.75% (3/80) "strongly disagree").

For the last statement in the table (numbered 30), when asking participants about the idea "Because of lacking motivation, you do not want to spend much time practicing speaking skills", making up 70% of the subject consented to the supposition mentioned above (the combination of 23.75% (23/80) strong agreements and 41.25% (33/80) agreements). Meanwhile, 18.75% (15/80) of participants showed hesitation, and 13 respondents, including 9/80 (11.25%) and 4/80 (5%) gave their disapproval and strong disapproval successively.

Through analyzing the findings in this table, it found that students in English course 16 had been facing psychological problems in the process of speaking. Their psychological problems embraced shyness, lack of motivation, fear of mistake, and lack of confidence.

F. Students' solutions

The following table, Table 6, includes 5 statements of suggested solutions to their problems in speaking.

Table 5: Students' solutions

Statements	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	No idea (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Solutions					
31. You use your phone to learn vocabulary, grammar, and practice speaking English.	42.5%	40%	13.75%	3.75%	0%
32. Youtube is one of the sources for you to practice speaking.	42.5%	42.5%	8.75%	6.25%	2.5%
33. You participate in English speaking clubs on and off-campus.	25%	41.25%	8.75%	17.5%	7.5%
34. You practice your speaking skills by listening to podcasts, reading the news, or watching a movie.	43.75%	41.25%	12.5%	2.5%	0%
35. To improve your speaking skills, you frequently play games that are related to English.	26.25%	38.75%	23.75%	7.5%	3.75%

Starting with statement 31, 34 of 80 participants (42.5%) strongly agreed and 32 others (40%) approved that they used their phone to learn vocabulary, grammar, and practice

speaking English. The residual consisted of 13.75% (11/80) hesitations and particularly 3 students showing disagreement (3.75%).

The next one was statement 32 whose results revealed that approval was given by more than half of the respondents. To be more specific, 42.5% (32/80) executed strong agreement and 42.5% (32/80) illustrated their concurrence. On the contrary, 7 students, corresponding to 8.75% stayed hesitant and the residual, including 6.25% (5/80) and 2.5% (2/80) disagreed and totally disagreed with the statement respectively.

Now turning to the next two statements in the table, statement 33 and statement 34. In the former, the ones giving disagreement were slightly up to 14 students (17.5%) and 7.5% (6/80) of participants gave entirely disagreement. On the contrary, there were 20 participants (25%) giving strong concurrence, along with the concurrence of 33 students (41.25%). Others stayed hesitant. As for the latter, only 2 students (2.5%) disagreed with "you participate in English speaking clubs on and off-campus". Meanwhile, it could be deduced that over three-fourths of students (43.75% (35/80) strongly agreed and 41.25% (33/80) agreed) confirmed that they practiced their speaking skills by listening to podcasts, reading the news, or watching a movie. In addition, there were 10 freshmen (12.5%) ticking on the column of "no idea" and 2 students (2.5%) choosing "disagree".

Lastly, over 65% of responders admitted they frequently played games that are related to English to improve their speaking skills. To be more specific, 26.25% (21/80) gave strong agreement and 38.75% (31/80) showed their concurrence. In contrast, the residual consisted of 23.75% (19/80) hesitations, 7.5% (6/80) of disapproval, and 3.75% (3/80) of severe disapproval.

As a whole, from the results of these 5 sentences, it could be inferred that most students used their phones to solve problems that they faced in speaking English such as learning vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Besides, students chose to practice speaking skills by conversing with themselves or their friends. Listening to podcasts, reading the news, watching a movie, and playing games that were related to English were also some of the solutions they chose to practice speaking English. However, a small number of students did not participate in English-speaking clubs on and off-campus.

4.1.2. Results from the interview

As reported in chapter 3, merely one instrument was not virtually enough for conducting intensive and reliable research. Consequently, in addition to the questionnaire, the interview papers were designed including 3 questions and delivered to 20 freshmen, aging from 18 to 22. After assembling those interview papers, the researcher analyzed to examine whether or not freshmen have encountered some problems in the process of speaking, as well as the solutions they used to overcome their problems.

After surveying on all 20 participants, every answer from three questions made by these participants was clarified one by one as follows.

Question 1: Do you think speaking is a difficult skill when learning a foreign language? Why or why not?

Apparently, 100% of the participants (20/20) agreed that speaking was a difficult skill when learning a foreign language. To explain their response, they stated that there were a variety of reasons why they believed speaking skills are difficult. The largest number of the students found that the main reason for the difficulties in speaking was their pronunciation. Next, a lack of vocabulary made it difficult for them to communicate their views to others. Besides, they found it difficult to talk in public because they lacked confidence in their speaking abilities. Finally, others believed that speaking skills was difficult because they have not practiced speaking English.

In conclusion, practically every student affirmed that speaking was a difficult skill. Vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and psychological issues are the reasons they thought make speaking difficult.

Question 2: What problems do you often encounter when speaking English?

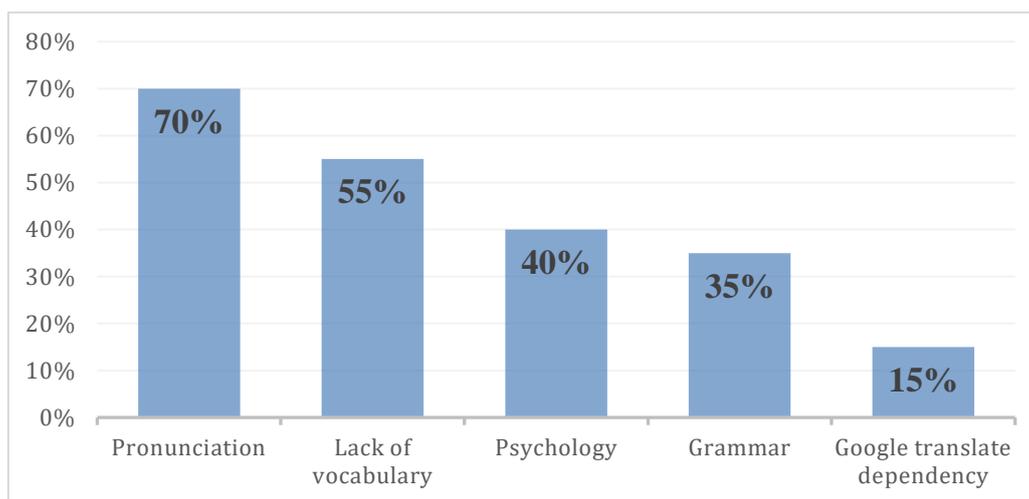


Figure 1: Student's problems related to speaking skills

The purpose of this question was to find out some problems related to speaking that students face up with. On looking at the chart, without much effort, observe the fact with students considered the pronunciation was the main problems in speaking with the percentage 70% (14/20) of students. Making up 55% (11/20) of the learners thought that lacking vocabulary made it difficult for them to speak. Furthermore, 35% (7/20) supposed that they did not speak fluently because they did not know how to arrange the words correctly. In other words, they had difficulty with English grammar. Unfortunately, 40% (5/20) of the students revealed that they had problems with psychological barriers. Some of those students explained that they felt shy and awkward in front of many people. Another finding from the information collected from 20 random students, 3 of them (15%) admitted that they depended on google translate when speaking. To recapitulate, even

students who were randomly invited to take the interview acknowledged that they encountered some problems when speaking.

Question 3: What do you do to solve your problems in speaking skills?

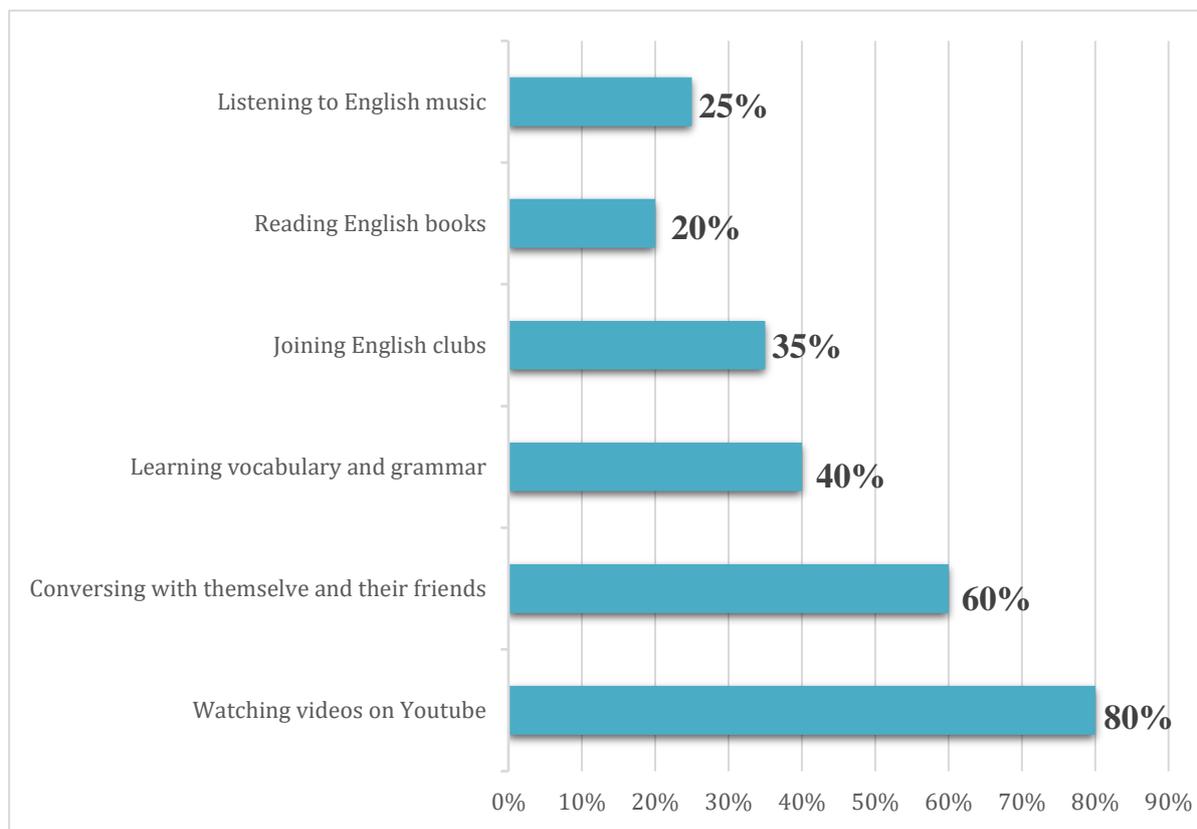


Figure 2: Students' solutions to solve their problems

Figure 8 reveals the survey students' solutions to solve their problems. On looking at the chart, it could be seen that a large number of students watched videos on YouTube to practice speaking which represents the highest proportion over 80% (16/20). Students discussed that they practiced speaking English by talking to themselves in front of a mirror or talking to friends in class, accounting for 60% (12/20). While other students assumed that going to English clubs was also an effective way to practice English; it took up to 35% (7/20). Reading English books, learning vocabulary and grammar, and listening to English music were also appreciated by students accounting for 20% (4/20), 40% (8/20), and 25% (5/20) respectively.

In conclusion, it was clear from three questions presented to 20 random freshmen that they experienced numerous problems in the process of speaking English, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and psychology. Furthermore, they applied a variety of solutions to resolve these issues such as practicing on their own by viewing videos on YouTube or participating in activities in clubs both on and off-campus.

4.2 Discussion

As stated in Chapter 1, the entire research was focused on identifying problems in speaking English among English-majored freshmen and providing solutions to those problems. After collecting information, analyzing, and calculating data about the problems that often occurred in speaking English through the questionnaires and the interviews. The results of the survey demonstrated that even though English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University have studied English for a long time, they were still not fluent in speaking English. Furthermore, the living conditions of the students were not equal; in particular, 75% (60/80) of freshmen came from rural areas. The fact that students in cities might study with a lot of modern technology and be taught new, effective methods in high school, whilst those in the countryside might not, made a major difference among learners. Therefore, this was a disadvantage for students in the countryside. In addition, based on the research results, it was undeniable that to succeed in learning English speaking, they have encountered many problems. There were five biggest problems that students should be concerned about including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, the influence of mother tongue, and psychology. These issues would be examined separately in order to shed light on them.

To begin with, vocabulary was one of the students' biggest problems because, without it, they could not speak effectively. While speaking, most students felt that they could not express their ideas because of lacking vocabulary. They only used simple words to express their idea and rarely used idioms or phrasal verbs in speaking. When they were unable to remember unfamiliar words, it was difficult to express themselves. That made them afraid to speak at home as well as at school.

Another obstacle for students when practicing speaking was grammatical structure. The majority of the students reported that they had problems with grammar while speaking English. Because there were too many grammatical structures that made them afraid and unsure how to employ them in their speech as well as in certain contexts. In addition, it was impossible for them to remember all of the grammatical structures. Furthermore, because students were exposed to their mother tongue from an early age, they frequently transferred Vietnamese structures to English sentences when learning English as a foreign language. The result also showed that they had a hard time discerning between the past, present, and future tense usage.

What is more, pronunciation had a significant impact on one's ability to communicate. The majority of students stated that pronouncing the final sounds /s/ and /z/ correctly is challenging for them. The reason for this was that native speakers pronounced ending sounds differently from Vietnamese, making it harder for students to pronounce English correctly. They also struggled to pronounce /θ/, /ð/, /z/, and /f/ because these consonants do not exist in Vietnamese. Another problem in pronunciation that caused students to speak ineffectively was that they spoke English without proper intonation, rhythm, or stress in English because they imitated the intonation of Vietnamese. They often used the wrong rhythm or omitted the rhythm/intonation made the audience misunderstand what they are trying to convey.

Next, it was easily seen that English majored freshmen faced many difficulties in speaking, especially the influence of mother tongue on speaking English. Through the statistical analysis, the number of students who had problems in their mother tongue was very magnificent. Students used their mother tongue in class to communicate with their friends. They admitted that they often translated from Vietnamese to English before speaking. In addition, they had a habit of speaking English as speaking Vietnamese, which meant that English words with several syllables were also broken down into separate sounds, and they often replaced the sounds in English with similar Vietnamese sounds. So, they stated that the influence of their mother tongue made it difficult for them to speak English.

Last, psychology in English speaking was also one of the mentioned factors that students have often encountered. The data collected showed that psychological factors affected students' ability to speak English. Motivation played a very important role in the learning process. For example, they did not want to spend much time practicing speaking because of lacking motivation. This was the reason why students were afraid of making mistakes and lacking confidence in front of their classmates. A large number of students felt that they could not react fast when talking in class because they rarely communicated in English in crowded places. They also felt shy whenever they spoke. That also made them feel afraid of being criticized or laughed at by their friends because they did not speak English smoothly. This was very clear evidence to prove that psychological obstacles restricted students' ability in speaking.

To overcome these problems, students have chosen solutions appropriate to their ability such as learning vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation by smartphone. To reduce boredom with studying, they listened to podcasts, read the news, watched movies, or played games related to English to practice speaking English as well as entertainment. One effective solution to dealing with shyness and practicing speaking was to join English clubs on and off-campus. However, there were still several students who were confused about this solution.

In conclusion, after collecting information about the problems that often occurred in speaking through the questionnaire and interview. The researcher's outcome figured out the fact that English-majored freshmen faced many difficulties in speaking. There were five biggest problems including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, the influence of the mother tongue, and psychology. The researcher also found that students all chose to use their phones to solve their problems by playing games, listening to podcasts, reading news, or watching movies related to English. In addition, freshmen practiced by conversing themselves and participated in English clubs.

5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Naturally, English is the primary language needed by many people all over the world, as it has a significant impact on so many aspects of life, including education, tourism, economics, and so on. The importance of learning English is not only in written form but

also how it can be used especially in daily life since it has been a mean of communication used by people around the world (Lathifah, 2015). However, mastering English speaking seems never to be an easy job for the students. This is because students had to encounter numerous problems during their English learning process, all of which had a significant impact on their English level, particularly their speaking abilities. Students learning English in Vietnam nearly always face these issues, and English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University are no different. This study sought to determine the problems that English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University have faced in speaking English, as well as provide some solutions to aid them in resolving their problems.

After conducting this research by analyzing the questionnaires and the interview papers collected from the freshmen, the researcher worked out some common problems in speaking of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University. Vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, the influence of mother tongue, and psychological problems were the problems influent students' speaking skills. The first one that caused students to have problems in speaking was their lack of vocabulary knowledge. The poverty of vocabulary prevented students from learning and using vocabulary effectively. A possible solution was individuals should arm themselves with a valuable vocabulary. For grammar, students frequently struggle with grammar in speaking English. Because the grammatical structures of English and Vietnamese were so unlike, students were often confused and unsure how to apply the grammar that they have been taught in conversation. To solve this problem, students must grasp fundamental grammar knowledge in order to form phrases or sentences in English structures. They also needed daily practice in order to develop the habit of reflecting and thinking in English. The next problem was pronunciation. In order to avoid this problem, students should pay attention to how native speakers pronounce their words and check them up in a dictionary. Students could then practice pronouncing words correctly on their own. The study also found that students' mother language had an impact on their ability to communicate in English. In this scenario, the problem can be handled by including English into school life and promoting spoken English skills. Students should practice these sound patterns repeatedly using a native speaker's model voice. The last issue worth discussing was students' psychology because while speaking English, most students lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation, and shyness. To address this issue, students must adopt a positive attitude toward learning English and actively participate in extracurricular activities or English clubs in order to improve their communication skills. In conclusion, it could be implied the fact that freshmen who majored in English had more than seven years of English in high school and one module of English-speaking subjects at university. However, they were still unable to interact in English and speak English clearly and efficiently. The explanation for this case was that they have not discovered a good method to practice speaking English.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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