



Enhancing English Speaking Skills of Tourism Majors: A Case Study at Phan Thiet University

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ABSTRACT: Speaking skills play a vital role in students' language skills mastering for the effects they put on other macro skills, and helping students improve their speaking skills is one of significant duties of lecturers of English. As a result, this study was carried out to investigate factors affecting students' speaking skills in order to suggest some recommendations on enhancing these skills for students. Research participants were 55 students studying at the tourism faculty of Phan Thiet University (UPT). A combination of research instruments including a survey questionnaire and an in-depth interview was chosen to collect the data. Based on the findings that the English speaking skills of the students at UPT were considerably influenced by anxiety and fear of mistakes, the study suggested some solutions to improve students' speaking skills.

Keywords: speaking skills, factors, anxiety, fear of mistakes

I. Introduction

Great speaking skills are necessary for effective communication in daily activities as well as in the academic environment (Thornbury, 2005, Rao, 2019). Lumettu & Runtuwene (2018) considered speaking as the priority in English learning and teaching which influence other skills. According to Tomak (2021), improving speaking is really challenging because it is a productive process requiring the learners' uniqueness and creativity in expressing themselves.

Although being a vital skill, English speaking has been underrated in Vietnam for a long time (Tran & Duong, 2020). The main reasons for poor English speaking skills in Vietnam are the opportunities for students to use English are limited, and students do not have a true speaking environment to practice speaking (Phan, 2017). Poor English speaking skills are mentioned in many researches (Bashir et al., 2011; Nguyen & Tran, 2015; Manurung & Izar, 2019).

This study aims to examine the factors which affect English speaking skills among students majoring in the tourism at UPT, and then recommend some solutions to assist them to develop these skills.

II. Literature review

2.1. Speaking skills

Torky (2006) regarded speaking as an interactive process in order to produce, receive, and process the information to construct meanings. Abidova et al. (2020) added that speaking was a speech activity which was conducted for verbal communication to transmit and exchange information.

Speaking can be in many forms including imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive (Kurniati & Novitri, 2015; Mukhlisin et al., 2020). Imitative speaking is the ability to mimic from small to larger patterns such as words, phrases, sentences (Asramadhani & Murni, 2013). When students are asked to repeat keywords grammatically and/or phonologically, they are imitative speaking (Masda, 2018). Intensive speaking, on the

other hand, refers to the self-initiated communication process in a certain language form (Ihsan, 2016). This type of speaking is frequently used in testing oral speaking competency (Widayanti et al., 2019). Responsive speaking is defined as a question and answers the task. The question is either a display question to collect correct answers, or a referential question to generate meaningful language in response (Vidhiasi, 2017). Interactive speaking is a conversation facilitated through face-to-face or another communication schema. In this kind of speaking, listeners and speakers are able to clarify and slow down the communication speed (Rahmtalla & Adam, 2020). Extensive speaking is the speaking practices outside the classroom (Le, 2018; Indrastana & Rinda, 2020).

In language practice, speaking is a vitally macro skill for people to share their feelings and exchange information in daily life (Türkben, 2019). In English teaching and learning, English speaking is an essential skill since English is the dominant business language and people cannot enter a global workforce without speaking English (Nishanthi, 2018). Brown (2010) stated that when teaching speaking, teachers should help students with developing not only the ability to build up grammatically accurate and logically connected phrases that are suitable to conversation situations but also the ability to pronounce words clearly and understandably.

2.2. Factors affecting speaking skills

Juhana (2012) presented four psychological factors namely anxiety, fear of mistake, shyness, and lack of confidence that challenged students from speaking English.

Adwas et al (2019) supposed that anxiety was a mental disorder caused by the “disturbances of mood, as well as of thinking, behavior, and physiological activity”. The anxiety often occurs when students are asked to speak before their fluency is achieved (Abdullah et al., 2010). Through the data retrieved from 78 students of English, Hasibuan & Irzawati (2019) concluded that there was a correlation between speaking anxieties and speaking performance, and speaking anxieties were from very low to very high. In a study with the participants of 128 non-English majors in a university in Vietnam, Le & Tran (2020) stated that when speaking, students have a fear of mistakes, negative evaluation, being laughed at, being the focus of attention, and they lack of confidence. The research also indicated that students with higher anxiety levels had lower language proficiency.

In addition, according to Ratnasari (2020), fear of mistake is a common psychological feeling when students speak English. As a result of interviews with 6 English learners, Krisna & Syafii (2020) found that fear of mistake was the first and the foremost reason preventing students from speaking English in the classroom. Besides, Alzahrani (2019) found that the fear of mistakes was an extremely influential factor towards the students' weakness in speaking English after surveying 59 English students in a university.

In term of shyness, Vilaplana-Pérez et al. (2020) said that it was a social anxiety disorder, and it affected students' educational performance. Humaera (2015) added that the students with shyness might not attain the good English speaking performance since it made their mind blank and they might not remember what intended to say. In a study on the relationship between English learners' shyness and the accuracy and the fluency of oral performance, with the data collected from 70 intermediate learners, Babapoor et al. (2018) stated that the students with shyness faced up poorer oral performance. Furthermore, in a study participated by 110 students, Olfaz (2019) confirmed that shyness had a negative impact on foreign language anxiety and they had a significant correlation with each other.

With regard to lack of confidence, Arifin (2017) showed that it was one of challenges in the learning environment, and the students lacking confidence had low self-efficacy influenced by the feeling of stupidity and worthlessness. In a research participated by 50 students, Tridinanti (2018) proved the correlation between the students' self-confidence and their speaking performance. Roysmanto (2018) also had the same conclusion in a study that these two factors were significantly correlated.

III. Research methodology

This study was conducted at UPT in Binh Thuan, Vietnam. The study sample was 55 students learning at the tourism faculties of UPT. These students aged between 18 and 22 years old and their gender is mixed

between male and female. The course book was English for restaurant workers, 2nd edition by Renee Talalla in 2008 of Compass Publishing with 15 units learnt in 15 class meetings from 2/2/2023 to 12/5/2023.

This research employed a survey questionnaire, a beneficial tool in “collecting information regarding affective information of teaching and learning, such as beliefs, attitudes, motivation, preferences, and so on,” (Wimolmas, 2013) and interviews, a helpful means for a case study, action research, evaluation, and surveys to understand the interviewees’ experience deeply and to evaluate rather exactly the situations (Schostak, 2005) as the research instruments. At the beginning of the course, 55 students received a questionnaire with a list of statements to provide their answers, and 5 among them took part in interviews with the researcher. All students’ answers were collected, retrieved, and keyed into an Excel spreadsheet for further data analysis.

The questionnaire had two parts. The first was used to collect the students’ demographic information including gender, age, years of English, and extra learning English outside the university. The second with 12 statements was to capture the students’ evaluation of the factors affecting their speaking skills, and was categorized into 4 groups consisting of Anxiety with statements 2,6,3; Fear of Mistakes with 1,12,10, Shyness were presented in 4,8,11, and Lack of Confidence in 9,5,7. These statements were adopted from Hidayati (2018), Mariam (2018), Al-Saraj (2014), and Bashosh et al. (2013), and presented in detail in the table below.

N0	Statements
1	I am worried of making mistakes when speaking English
2	I often worry in English speaking classes
3	I am anxious to have English speaking classes even when I prepared well for the lesson
4	I am afraid of being laughed by other students when speaking English
5	I am worried to be left behind if English speaking contents are moved quickly
6	My heart pounds when I am called to speak in English speaking classes
7	I have a fear of asking my English lecturers questions related to the lessons
8	I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people
9	I often feel that I have poorer English speaking skills than other student in the class
10	I am afraid that my lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make
11	I feel embarrassed if I volunteer to speak English
12	I am worried about repeating the mistakes too many times when speaking English

The interviews were held with 5 students among participants after they finished answering the questionnaire. Each of them was carried out in different days, and lasted about 15 minutes in a friendly way between the researcher and the students. The in-depth interview designed to collect students’ opinions on their speaking skills with 6 questions brought further discussions and solutions to difficulties that students dealt with in their English speaking.

IV. Research results

After collecting data from questionnaires and interviews participated by 55 students, the researcher used frequency analysis to interpret the achieved result.

	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	12	21.8%
Female	43	78.2%
Age		
Less than 20	51	92.7%
20-25	4	7.3%
Above 25	0	0%
Years of learning English		
Less than 12	7	12.7%

12-17	47	85.5%
Over 17	1	1.8%
Attending extra English classes		
Yes	2	3,6%
No	53	96.4%)

Table 1: Demographic Information

It is observed that the participants of the survey were 12 male 21.8% and 43 78.2% female students. The distribution between the two genders is not quite equal through the fact that the total number of females is nearly four times as big as that of males. It is understandable that because they came from the tourism faculty whose training programs attract many females. Besides, there were 51 students (92.7%) less than 20 years old and 4 (7.3%) aged from 20 to 25. It was true that most of them attended the university right after graduating from the high schools. Among participants were 7 students who have been learning English for less than 12 years (12.7%), 47 ones (85.5%) learning English for from 12 to 17 years, and only 1 (1.8%) has studied English for more than 17 years. It can be said that the majority of students have been learning English since they were in grade 1. In addition, most of them 53 out of 55 (96.4%) did not attend extra English classes besides the university's English courses. This may be because, as far as the researcher concerned, many students in class had part-time jobs at night, and had a limit on finance, they could not go to private classes.

The study continued with the interviews results' interpretations and descriptive analysis for 4 groups with 12 statements including anxiety, fear of mistakes, shyness, and lack of confidence. The Likert scale with 5 points (Strongly Disagree - SD, Disagree - D, Neutral - N, Agree - A, and Strongly Agree - SA) was used. By combining the frequency analysis and the descriptive statistics, the researcher could understand the dominant tendency in the students' evaluation for each statement.

First, following is the descriptive statistic and analysis for anxiety.

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
I often worry in English speaking classes	1	1.8	3	5.5	3	5.5	40	72.7	8	14.5
I am anxious to have English speaking classes even when I prepared well for the lesson	4	7.3	2	3.6	4	7.3	38	69.1	7	12.7
My heart pounds when I am called to speak in English speaking classes	0	0	0	0	1	1.8	5	9.1	49	89.1

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic for Anxiety

It is clear from the table that nearly most students (strong) agreed with all statements concerned about their anxiety in English speaking classes. In detail, 48 students (87.2%) felt worried in English speaking class, and over 80% (45 out of 55) were anxious in English speaking class regardless of lesson's careful preparation. Especially, up to 98.2% of students said that their heart pounded when being called in English speaking classes. It is crystal that anxiety was a big issue to the tourism majors in English speaking classes. Additionally, this could be concluded from what students shared in the interviews. All students interviewed (100%) confessed that they were nervous in speaking classes for different reasons such as "Speaking skills are challenging and unfamiliar with me", "Hardly did I speak English in class before", "I often forget many contents I intend to say out", and "It is hard for me to understand thoroughly my teachers' questions. I think that to some extent, listening skill affects speaking skills".

Second, the descriptive statistic is conducted for fear of mistake as below.

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
I am worried of making mistakes when speaking English	0	0	1	1.8	1	1.8	6	33.0	48	87.3
I am afraid that my lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make	0	0	0	0	2	3.6	7	12.7	46	83.6
I am worried about repeating the mistakes too many times when speaking English	2	3.6	1	1.8	1	1.8	11	20	40	72.7

Table 3: Descriptive Statistic for Fear of Mistakes

Generally speaking, the number of the students who strongly agreed and agreed with statements on Fear of mistakes is significantly high. There was 87.3 % students (48) strongly agreed that they were worried of making mistakes when speaking English, and the same level of agreement for the statements “I am afraid that my lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make” and “I am worried about repeating the mistakes too many times when speaking English” was 83.6 % (46) and 72.7 % (40) respectively. The data showed that only few students and even no one (strongly) disagreed with 3 items on Fear of mistakes. In other words, Fear of mistakes is a considerable factor having certain effects on students’ speaking skills. In addition, in the interview, students said that they were afraid there were something wrong in what they spoke in class, may be the incorrect vocabulary, intonation, grammar they used. They added that, sometimes, they repeated the mistakes many times. This made they feel uncomfortable, and could not understand why themselves made stupid mistakes. Furthermore, all students shared frankly that they were afraid of being corrected the mistakes by the teachers because they thought that it was them who wasted plentiful of time of the whole class and teachers’ energy. They also said that it was really worse if they were asked to stand still in class and were explained each mistakes by the teacher. In short, Fear of mistakes was considered as big matter to students in speaking classes.

Third, the result of Shyness was presented as below.

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
I am afraid of being laughed by other students when speaking English	13	23.6	25	45.5	8	14.5	5	9.1	4	7.3
I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people	12	21.8	27	49.1	6	10.9	7	12.7	3	5.5
I feel embarrassed if I volunteer to speak English	14	25.4	31	53.4	5	9.1	3	5.5	2	3.6

Table 4: Descriptive Statistic for Shyness

The table indicated that shyness was not the main factor hindering students from speaking English. To illustrate, up to 38 students (79.1%) (strongly) disagreed with the statement “I am afraid of being laughed by other students”, 8 students (14.5%) remained neutral, and only 9 out of 55 students (16.4%) showed their strong (agreement) to this statement. The number of students who (strongly) opposed “I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people” was rather large, 39 among 55 students (70.9%), whereas only 10 students (18.2%) (strongly) agreed with this statement. Furthermore, the number of students not felling

nervous when volunteering to talk English is quite significant, 45 students accounting for 78.8% while only 5 students (9.1%) felt embarrassed when they were ready to say out. We can also confirm that shyness did not have bad effects on students' speaking due to their shares in the interview. For the question "Do you feel shy when speaking English in front of classmates?", all 5 students said that speaking English in front of friends was not shyness because they were familiar with communicating with others, especially when what they were going to say had been done much preparation, and they volunteered to share in class. Also, they thought that it was no use laughing at others when they spoke English, and that being laughed did not matter while their classmates did not have the habit of doing that.

The last group was Lack of Confidence whose result was displayed as following.

Statements	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
I am worried to be left behind if English speaking contents are moved quickly	22	40	23	41.8	5	9.1	3	5.5	2	3.6
I have a fear of asking my English lecturers questions related to the lessons	26	47.3	20	36.4	6	10.9	2	3.6	1	1.8
I often feel that I have poorer English speaking skills than other student in the class	28	51	22	40	3	5.5	1	1.8	1	1.8

Table 5: Descriptive Statistic for Lack of Confidence

According to the data collected, it can be concluded that the students were quite confident to speak English. There were 45 (81%) among 55 students did not worry to be left behind if English speaking contents are moved quickly; 46 students (83.7%) did not have a fear of asking my English lecturers questions related to the lessons; and 50 students (91%) did not feel that they have poorer English speaking skills than other student in the class. The number of students showing their lack of confidence was very low. For example, only 2 students (3.6%) felt to be weaker in English speaking compared with the other classmates and 3 ones (5.4%) were afraid of posing questions to English teachers. Besides, in the talk with the researcher, students said that if they missed or had any difficulties in understanding the lessons, they would have a careful look at home again or asked the teachers to help them with the challenging parts. They told the researcher that they themselves were used to talking to the teachers about the lessons and self-study.

To conclude, the data gathered from the questionnaire and interviews showed that anxiety and fear of mistakes were 2 main factors preventing students from speaking English.

V. Implications

The data collected from the questionnaire and the interviews have brought some solutions to improve students' English speaking skills.

First, because most students were nervous in speaking classes, lecturers should help them lower this feeling by increasing the friendly direct conversations with the students to better understand their concerns, difficulties, and the levels of their anxiety levels before and during the speaking classes. The lecturers also need to be more attentive and helpful by offering advice to help students overcome their negative moods. These tasks should be repeated via constant communication between the lecturers and the students so that the students, to some extent, can put aside their distress when joining English speaking classes.

Second, the lecturers should clarify as much as possible all instructions before and during the speaking activities in the classroom to ensure that students can understand fully what and how to do the speaking tasks.

In speaking classes, especially in the very first class meetings, lecturers should also pose easy questions, use basic words, explain problems many times, and check students' understanding. Moreover, lecturers should require students to speak out short sentences, or join games in which speaking skills are used so that students can make themselves familiar with and be attracted gradually into the speaking tasks. In other words, it is the lecturers' significant duty to involve students' engagement into speaking classroom activities.

Third, because the majority of students were afraid of making mistakes, lecturers should perform a further analysis on mistake making in exploring knowledge to help students accept that this problem is the certain steps of practicing language skills, and we all need time and patience to not repeat the mistakes. Furthermore, lecturers should keep in mind some strategies in mistake correcting. For instance, lecturers should need to collect students' frequent mistakes, and then hold open discussions with them about the very common mistakes. The discussions purposes are for learning where students can learn from others' mistakes and can avoid those mistakes the next times not for blaming instead.

Next, lecturers should encourage students to speak English as much as possible both inside and outside the classroom by designing peer talk and peer correction activities in which students have partners to share the same tasks, discuss and listen to what they will talk about, and point out the mistakes and correct their mistakes if any. Besides pair work or group work, self-practice is considered to be important and helpful for students to improve their speaking skills. Self-practice and self-correction give students more chances to review their language skills at anytime and anywhere they are available. In this case, lecturers' instructions and guides are the foremost factors to keep students engaged in speaking practices.

Finally, lecturers should give students speaking homework and assignments as further practice. The assignments can be students' recorded responses toward given questions which are sent to the lecturers for feedback and evaluation. The recordings can also be used as reference materials for students to discuss and learn with one another.

VI. Conclusion

Although it is said that traditionally, lack of confidence and shyness are also factors making an impact on students' speaking skills, this study proved that they were only difficulties by a small number of students. The results of the analyses and discussions indicated that there existed some significant challenges students faced when speaking English and such variables as anxiety and fear of mistakes. It is suggested that lecturers should help students figure out these troubles. For instance, lecturers should show students the role of mistake making, and correct the students' mistakes in the most appropriate and effective ways. They also assigned some speaking activities as assignments in pair work or group work. Besides, before asking students to discuss in groups, lecturers can let them study alone to figure out the answers; or before organizing some games or auditory activities, lecturers can give very clear instructions. Detailed instructions as regards how the task should be performed should also be given so as to "reduce learner misunderstanding, dissatisfaction and opposition" (Peacock 2001, p. 245).

VII. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE**VIETNAMESE VERSION**

Các em thân mến,

Cô đang thực hiện nghiên cứu “Tăng cường kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên chuyên ngành Du lịch – một nghiên cứu tại trường Đại học Phan Thiết”. Bằng việc trả lời bảng hỏi dưới đây, các em sẽ giúp cô hoàn thành nghiên cứu và góp phần giúp nhà trường nâng cao hơn nữa chất lượng giảng dạy kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh cho sinh viên chuyên ngành Du lịch. Chân thành cảm ơn sự hợp tác của các em.

Phần I: Thông tin cá nhân

Giới tính ☐ Nam ☐ Nữ
 Tuổi ☐ Dưới 20 ☐ 20-25 ☐ Trên 25
 Số năm học tiếng Anh: ☐ Dưới 12 ☐ 12-17 ☐ Trên 17
 Học thêm tiếng Anh ngoài chương trình học của trường: ☐ Có ☐ Không

Phần II: Đánh giá

Vui lòng cung cấp đánh giá của các em cho các nhận định dưới đây bằng cách đánh dấu (x) vào ô thích hợp:

1 – Rất không đồng ý 2 – Không đồng ý 3 – Trung tính
 4 – Đồng ý 5 – Hoàn toàn đồng ý

N0	Các nhận định	1	2	3	4	5
1	Tôi sợ mắc lỗi khi nói tiếng Anh					
2	Tôi thường cảm thấy lo lắng trong giờ học nói tiếng Anh					
3	Tôi cảm thấy lo lắng khi có giờ học nói tiếng Anh ngay cả khi tôi đã chuẩn bị bài chu đáo					
4	Tôi sợ các bạn trong lớp sẽ cười tôi khi tôi đang nói tiếng Anh					
5	Tôi lo lắng bị bỏ lại phía sau nếu các nội dung của bài học nói tiếng Anh được triển khai nhanh					
6	Tìm tôi đập mạnh khi được gọi phát biểu trong giờ học nói tiếng Anh					
7	Tôi sợ phải hỏi giảng viên tiếng Anh các câu hỏi liên quan đến bài học					
8	Tôi cảm thấy xấu hổ khi nói tiếng Anh trước người khác					
9	Tôi thường cảm thấy kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của bản thân kém hơn các bạn khác trong lớp					
10	Tôi sợ rằng giảng viên của tôi sẽ sửa tất cả các lỗi tôi mắc phải					
11	Tôi cảm thấy lúng túng nếu tôi tự nguyện nói tiếng Anh					
12	Tôi lo lắng về việc lặp lại lỗi quá nhiều lần khi nói tiếng Anh					

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE**ENGLISH VERSION**

Dear students,

I am conducting a study on “Enhancing English speaking skills of tourism majors: a case study at Phan Thiet University”. By answering the questionnaire below, you will help me complete the research and contribute to support our university to further improve the quality of teaching English speaking skills to tourism-majored students. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Part I: Demographic Information

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
 Age: ☐ Less than 20 ☐ 20-25 ☐ Above 25
 Years of learning English: ☐ Less than 12 ☐ 12-17 ☐ Over 17
 Attending extra English classes besides the university's English courses:
☐ Yes ☐ No

Part II: Assessment

Please provide your rating/score for below statements

1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree

N0	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am worried of making mistakes when speaking English					
2	I often worry in English speaking classes					
3	I am anxious to have English speaking classes even when I prepared well for the lesson					
4	I am afraid of being laughed by other students when speaking English					
5	I am worried to be left behind if English speaking contents are moved quickly					
6	My heart pounds when I am called to speak in English speaking classes					
7	I have a fear of asking my English lecturers questions related to the lessons					
8	I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people					
9	I often feel that I have poorer English speaking skills than other student in the class					
10	I am afraid that my lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make					
11	I feel embarrassed if I volunteer to speak English					
12	I am worried about repeating the mistakes too many times when speaking English					

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

VIETNAMESE VERSION

1. Em cảm thấy thế nào khi có giờ học nói tiếng Anh?
2. Em có thể cho cô biết lý do tại sao em có những cảm giác đó không?
3. Điều gì khiến em lo lắng nhất khi nói tiếng Anh?
4. Em có cảm thấy ngại ngùng khi nói tiếng Anh trước mặt các bạn cùng lớp không?
5. Em sẽ làm gì trong trường hợp có một phần bài học nói mà em không thể hiểu được ngay tại lớp?
6. Em mong đợi giảng viên trong khóa học này sẽ làm gì để giúp em cải thiện kỹ năng nói của bản thân?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ENGLISH VERSION

1. How do you feel when having English speaking classes?
2. Can you tell me the reasons why you have those feelings?
3. What makes you worried most when speaking English?
4. Do you feel shy when speaking English in front of classmates?
5. What do you do in case there is a part of speaking lessons you cannot understand right in class?
6. What do you expect the lecturer in this course to do to help you improve your speaking skills?