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# Common Errors in Speaking of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay do University, in Vietnam

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*Keywords: speaking, errors, english majored sophomores, university.*

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# Common Errors in Speaking of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay do University, in Vietnam

Nga H.T. Nguyen [α] & Quynh N.P. Le [σ]

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## I. Introduction

This chapter mentions the rationale, the aim, the questions, the significance, and the organization of the research.

### a) Rationale

In the 21st century, English is not only a popular language in many countries but also the language of science, aviation, computer, diplomacy, and tourism. Knowing English helps students increase their chances of getting a good job in domestic multinational companies or looking for work abroad. According to the British Council, by 2020, about two billion people in the world study English. English is used to communicate with native speakers, but it is also the world's most popular second language. If we want to talk to someone from another country, then English is always the most suitable choice.

In English, speaking is a vital skill because it has always occupied a place in most English language courses. Speaking is the essential skill for all who want to learn English to improve their career and develop themselves. Besides, speaking is seen as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information." (Burns and Joyce, 1997)

In the modern world, everything is linked with speaking skills. One who is good at speaking can conquer the whole world. Good communication is students' passport for better job opportunities. During interviews, true talent is judged through group discussions, debates, presentation skills. Therefore, the applicant must have good oral communication skills.

However, speaking fluently like a native speaker is not easy. Learners face many problems, most of which are affected by their mother tongue. Because each country has different culture and language, learners easily confuse two languages such as pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar. One cannot master speaking skills even after studying English for at least nine years; especially, students majoring in English at Tay Do University also make many mistakes while speaking. For these reasons, the study "Common Errors in Speaking of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University, Vietnam" is conducted. It is expected that this study will point out some common mistakes that English-majored students encounter when speaking. Thereby, it can help them find out valuable solutions.

### b) Research aims

As mentioned above, learning a new language is not easy; learners often make errors while speaking. To improve speaking skills, learners need a lot of effort, time, and a high determination. It is easier if learners try to practice speaking as much as possible to recognize their problems and find ways to overcome them. This research aimed to find out the common errors that the English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University often encounter when speaking so that they can select their ways to improve their speaking skill.

### c) Research questions

This research was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. Do English-majored sophomores make errors when speaking?
2. What common errors do the English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University often encounter in speaking?

### d) Significance of the study

Speaking English fluently is the goal that any English learners must achieve, including English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University. Most students still make many mistakes when speaking English. This research was conducted to help English-majored sophomores realize their problems. From this, they can figure out the most suitable ways to enhance their speaking skills.

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*e) Organization of the study*

This study is separated into five main chapters.

*Chapter One*- Introduction - provides the rationale, research aims, research questions. Besides, the significance and organization of this study are also listed here.

*Chapter Two*- Literature Review - includes introducing the English language, the concept and the importance of speaking skills, and the common errors while speaking English.

*Chapter Three*- Research Methodology - shows the research methods used in this study, including characteristics such as research design, participants and instruments.

*Chapter Four*- Results and Discussion - reports the findings of this research to figure out the participants' common errors when speaking English. Then, the discussion will follow to wrap up this chapter.

*Chapter Five*- Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations - gives the conclusion, implication of the study and also recommendations for further researches.

## II. Literature Review

This chapter presents the definitions of speaking, the importance of speaking English, some common errors in speaking English, and previous studies.

*a) Definitions of speaking*

The definitions of speaking have been debated by many researchers with different perspectives. It led to a significant amount of the terms, some of which are mentioned below.

Firstly, it is noted that speaking is defined in a way that is easy and simple to understand. According to Revell (1979), "speaking is an exchange process between people, of knowledge, of information, of ideas, of options, of feeling, so there must be concept, ideas, in the fellow speakers of what they are going to say." In short, speaking can be understood as the act of creating sounds; it is also defined as a process of receiving, and exchanging information. It helps the speakers easily express their thoughts and feelings.

Secondly, speaking depends on context or situation. The context includes the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking are often spontaneous, open-ended, and mind-developing. Speaking requires learners not only to know how to create specific language points such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary but also to understand when to speak and how to speak by each context. Chaney and Burk (1998) emphasized, "speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts." Besides, Harmer (2007) stated that "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."

In addition, Li (2003) argued that "speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English." Last but not least, Nunan (2003) also shared the viewpoint when stressing that "speaking as the use of language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency." It is concluded that speaking is the ability to create the language and share ideas.

In a word, speaking English is the ability to convey verbal information. It is not only express clearly in front of others but also express ideas, feelings, and thoughts.

*b) The importance of speaking English*

Using English has become popular nowadays. English can make it easy for everyone to communicate with strangers around the world. Communication plays a significant role in getting success in all fields. Language is used as a tool for communication. People cannot communicate perfectly without using language. Furthermore, people cannot achieve their goals without using proper language to communicate. For this reason, English is considered an international language, and it is used all over the world; it serves the communication of people living in different places.

According to Bueno, Madrid, and Mclaren (2006), "Speaking is one of the most difficult skills a language learner faces. Speaking is also considered the most important of the four basic language skills of English." Speaking English is considered the key to open a wonderful world by its effects, such as integrating the world together with the penetration of foreign companies into the Vietnamese market. If students speak English, they can work with foreign partners, international fields, and advancement in their careers. In addition, for those who are not yet working, English shows a huge part of abilities and intelligence, making it easy to get a good job with extremely high salaries. Therefore, students have a great advantage when they attend job interviews in English.

If the students have dreams of going abroad to study or work, English is indispensable because it is the basic thing to communicate abroad. If students have a good background in English, they will be more likely to succeed.

In short, English is not only a foreign language ability, but this is also one of the remarkable achievements. The importance of speaking English is also reflected in relationships. If someone has good English speaking skills, they will not be embarrassed when interacting with foreigners; they can speak confidently instead of being reserved. Interestingly, it is



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a skill that people want to be good at. However, it is also the skill that they are most afraid to practice.

*c) Some common errors in speaking English*

Honestly, anyone learning a new language also makes mistakes. It sounds difficult to accept, but it is true. It is not easy to become a good learner with the four basic English skills, especially speaking skills. English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University also faced some errors. Through this study, some common errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar that most students have encountered through their communication abilities are discussed.

i. *Pronunciation errors*

Pronunciation is as important as any other aspects of foreign language learning. Ur (1996) stated, "Pronunciation includes in language and phonology, accent and rhythm, intonation, the combination of sounds, the sound connection." The correct pronunciation is very necessary to develop speaking skills. According to Hinkel (2005), "A second language learner needs to master the individual characteristic of the sound of a new language." Furthermore, it is good for the students to be able to speak naturally like the native speaker. Pronouncing words incorrectly may cause a serious consequence that is a misunderstanding among people. As a result, other people cannot recognize some familiar words when a person is saying if they have mispronunciation of those words. Pronunciation errors include final sounds, word stress, and intonation.

a. *Final sounds*

Vietnamese has no distinction between voiced and voiceless sounds; many Vietnamese students have difficulty in speaking English. When speaking English, students also often forget to pronounce the final sounds. This is quite easy to understand because Vietnamese has no final sounds. Final sounds are very important factors while speaking English. There are a lot of words that have nearly the same sound; the final consonant is a key to recognize exactly the words that others are talking about. For example, two words "win" and "wind" have nearly the same phonetic transcriptions: /win/ and /wind/. If the speakers do not pronounce the final sound /d/ in the word "wind", then the word "wind" will be changed into "win". Besides, if the speakers pronounce the sound /n/to/ŋ/, the word "win" will be converted to "wing". A little error in pronunciation of the final sounds can also cause the listeners to misinterpret the speakers' meaning.

Besides, mispronouncing the two ending sounds /-s/ and /-ed/ is also very dangerous. Many students do not remember the correct pronunciation of the final sound /-s/ and /-ed/, which will make it difficult for foreigners to understand. Moreover, when speaking English, students can turn their sentences into a completely different meaning when they pronounce incorrectly. Nguyen (2015) stated that "Vietnamese speakers often get confused between /s/ and /z/. They replace /s/ for /z/ so that a word such as peas is pronounced as peace". The /s/ and /z/ sounds do not occur at the final position in Vietnamese words, but for English words, they do. Consequently, when speaking English, learners often take these sounds too seriously, and this causes them to make pronunciation errors. Most students do not realize the difference between two sounds /s/, and /z/. On the other hand, some people often add the /s/ sound in both adjectives and non-count nouns. For example, instead of saying "very fun" many speakers say "very funs", and "some water" will be changed into "some waters". It also happens with the /t/ and /d/ sounds as they are pronounced /ed/.

Speaking English well, English-majored sophomores must fix the above errors. If learners can pronounce the final sounds correctly, foreigners will easily understand what they want to talk about.

b. *Word stress*

Word stress is a magic key for students to speak English well. In English, word stress is not an optional extra that students can add whenever they want. It is an essential part of the language. Students who use word stress can communicate quickly and effectively, even in difficult situations. Stress is very important when speaking English because a word can entirely change meaning depending on the stress. For example, the word "contest" has two syllables: con-test. If it is stressed on the first syllable, the word "contest" is a noun that means "a competition". On the other hand, the word with stress on the second syllable is a verb that means "to oppose". Even if the listener understands what is said, errors in word stress can make them feel ridiculous, or even irritable.

Ngo (2001) claimed that "Vietnamese is a tonal language in which changes in pitch level and contour signal changes in meaning." He also mentioned that "Vietnamese is a syllable-timed language, and English is stress-timed language." Firstly, students need to know about the definition of a syllable-timed language and a stress-timed language. In a syllable-timed language, each syllable is given the same amount of time pronounced with the same length, but in stress-timed language, the stress syllables appear regularly. Therefore, Vietnamese learners have problems with the timing of stressed words. They often speak English without stress any syllables or stress the wrong position. They pronounce all parts of the word at almost the same volume. Meanwhile, word stress in English is very diverse. It can appear in any syllable, maybe in the first, the second, the third, or even in the fourth syllable of the word. Each stressed position has its meaning. For example, a word can be stressed at the first syllable if it works as a noun or the second syllable if it works as a



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verb. That is why it is difficult for foreigners to understand what Vietnamese want to say and vice versa.

In short, word stress is an important element in English that students should remember. Using word stress, helps students feel more confident and improve their speaking skills.

c. *Intonation*

Intonation does not exist in isolation. It only makes sense if it is accompanied by three factors: grammar, attitude, and discourse. Intonation is the supporting factor for these factors. With intonation, the message that the speaker wants to send will become more clear, especially attracting listeners. Native speakers always use intonation to be able to easily guess the other's feelings. Intonation is also a testament to English proficiency for English learners; the more intonation they use, the more natural their voice becomes.

Using English intonation is not easy for people learning English as a second language. Each language has its own intonation rules. If English is not the speakers' mother tongue, they have to practice hardly to make their voice more natural. Le (1999) claimed that "The curriculum in their native language from kindergarten to high school did not have any exact standard for Vietnamese intonation, so Vietnamese people usually do not know what intonation is exactly, even there are some people who think that the Vietnamese language does not have intonation." That is the reason why Vietnamese students begin to focus on improving their speaking skills; they are always confused about using intonation when speaking English, students often speak English with a monotone accent, and they do not stress the words. Some of them also have trouble with intonation; they raise their voice in the wrong part of the sentences, especially in wh-questions and tag questions. Those errors cause a lot of misunderstanding situations in reality.

Intonation involves the rise and fall of the voice when speaking in full sentences. Incorrect intonation can change the meaning of a sentence or misinterpret the meaning. It is important to master English intonation if students want to sound natural and keep listeners focus on the content that they speak.

ii. *Vocabulary errors*

Vocabulary is an individual word or a set of words that have specific meanings. Kamil and Hiebert (2005) stated that, "Generally vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The words come in at least two forms; oral and print. Oral vocabulary misses the set of words for which we know the meanings when we speak or read orally. While print vocabulary consists of those words for which the meaning is known when we write or read silently." Also, Ur (1996) stated that "Vocabulary is one of the important things to be taught in learning a foreign language because it will be impossible to speak up without a variety of words." Vocabulary errors include word order, word choice, and lack of vocabulary.

a. *Word order*

One of the most common errors is the wrong word order. According to Biber (1999), "The term word order is most often used to refer to the order of the elements in the clause". Crystal (1980) also stated that "Word order is a term used in grammatical analysis to refer to the sequential arrangement of words in larger linguistic units." It means that word order refers to the arrangement of words in a sentence. The common standard of word order in English is "Subject + Verb + Object." To determine the proper sequence of words, students need to understand clearly what the subject, verb, and object are.

Word order is important in English, and it can change the whole meaning of a sentence if students speak the wrong word order. In English, some sentences can be made up of the same words, but their roles are completely different because students have used the arrangement of words in the sentence to determine the subject and the direct object. For example, "People eat fish." has a different meaning from "Fish eat people." In the first sentence, we know that "people" is the subject because it stands before the verb, and "fish" is the direct object of the sentence because it comes after the verb. But in the second sentence, the roles of the words are opposite. And the meaning has changed completely. Therefore, word order is very important in English; it is the main factor in determining a sentence.

b. *Word choice*

A word is the simplest part of any language. While communicating or delivering any ideas or thoughts, students must use proper words. There are many factors that determine choosing a word. Word choice is an important part of any communication. The word choice is the style of expression. In general, a good speaker is someone who will choose words that they are comfortable with, confident in, and simple enough for the audience to understand.

First of all, students often repeat a word several times while speaking because they cannot find alternative words or synonyms. They also have no habit of using relative pronouns (Who, Whom, Which, That). Moreover, the embarrassment of students when using synonyms is a common problem. Most of them get confused about synonyms. For example, the word "refuse" and "deny", both of them mean do nothing. But the word "refuse" means refusing to do something; it is usually followed by a verb (He refused to answer any question). The word "deny" means negation; it is usually followed by a noun (Both of them denied any responsibility for this tragedy).



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Another common error is made that the students often use words in the wrong context. For example, when going to an interview, you cannot say "Hey, what's up" to the recruiter. This is a way of greeting in a normal communication setting, between friends or close people. Students must develop the habit of using contextual words. They must use the most appropriate word while speaking to avoid misinterpreting the listener. If they use an incorrect word, the message delivered is not meant. Using the wrong words sometimes makes a situation awkward and unclear.

In short, word choice is an equally important factor in forming a complete sentence. Students need to pay attention to using words to avoid making negative judgments from others.

c. *Lack of vocabulary*

Vocabulary is an important factor in the process of learning to speak English. McCathy (1990) stated, "Vocabulary is regarded as a free-standing item of language that has a meaning." Poor vocabulary prevents many students from expressing their ideas. Although there are many students starting to learn English from primary school to university, their vocabulary is still relatively little. Students are studied basic English in university while speaking in real life, native speakers tend to use slang, idioms, phrasal verbs. In short, the English-majored sophomores also have many problems when speaking English with simple words. Lack of vocabulary is another reason why speaking becomes difficult and ineffective.

When learners have enough English vocabulary, their speaking ability will improve, and communicate well with others under any circumstances. Vocabulary building is a prerequisite when learners are learning a second language. Besides, students also do not often use academic words while communicating. Using academic words helps listeners appreciate students' English proficiency. Therefore, students need to learn vocabulary first and understand the meaning of each word. Knowledge of vocabulary will create success for students in communication.

In short, vocabulary seems to be the main reason why students feel uncomfortable in expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings when speaking English.

iii. *Grammar errors*

Grammar is a study in which sentences are structured and formatted so that it may be considered a bit boring to study grammar correctly because it is worth the time and effort. If learners do not know the grammar rules, they will never communicate in English effectively. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), "Grammar becomes difficult because learners do not learn structures in a time." Grammar errors include wrong tense, wrong passive voice, and wrong part of speech.

a. *Wrong tense*

In English grammar, tense is the most important part, and one cannot deny that it is also the most difficult part in English grammar, which learners have to spend much time understanding the way to use correctly and properly. Halliday (2002) said that if the learners of English as a second language do not understand the concept of tense, they cannot improve their English at a high level. According to Wikipedia, "Tense is a form of the verb used to indicate the moment of an action or state occurring." There are three main tenses in English: past, present, and future tense. Each tense represents a certain moment and has many different functions. There are four forms of tense: simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous.

Students often have problems in choosing the suitable tense to say because each tense has different functions and situations. For example, when students want to tell a problem that happened, they are confused about what form of past tense to use. According to Nguyen (2015), "Vietnamese students do not know how to use verb tenses correctly. In particular, they cannot distinguish between present perfect tense and simple past tense." They make a lot of mistakes and get confused with choosing the suitable tenses. These mistakes make it difficult for the listeners to understand and lead to ineffective communication.

Besides, it is also a common error that students do not remember all the structures of tense. There are many structures in each tense that students need to remember. This is very important in learning English. Students need to pay attention and memorize tense structures to improve their speaking skills.

For this reason, it should be noted that in specific situations, students should use appropriate tenses to maintain conversations. They must determine the exact forms of English verbs when speaking. Furthermore, the use of precise tenses helps students converse with foreigners clearly and effectively.

b. *Wrong passive voice*

"Passive voice is a highly useful structure used in the grammatical analysis of voice, referring to a sentence, clause or verb form where the grammatical subject is typically the recipient or 'goal' of the action denoted by the verb" (Crystal 1980). In short, passive voice is a useful form in speaking English. It is used when the students want to focus on the action and the object of the sentence. Besides, it is used when they want to be more polite in certain situations.

Passive voice is also used to report things, especially in scientific literature, and it is also an important and practical English grammatical structure for learners. The passive voice in English comprises two elements: the appropriate form of the verb 'be' + past participle. However, if students understand all the rules



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of passive voice, it becomes extremely simple to change the active sentence to the passive one.

Besides, students are also confused about how to use correct tense in passive voice. Tense is an important element in passive voice structure. For example, if students can distinguish the tenses clearly, they can use the passive voice easily because each tense has its passive voice structure created by combining a form of the auxiliary verb with a past participle. Vietnamese passive voice structures do not depend on tenses like English; students do not have a habit that pays attention to tenses. Students are usually confused about changing forms of verbs while using passive voice structure. They cannot change a verb into its past participle immediately, so their conversations are not consecutive. Therefore, remembering the correct tenses can help students create a complete and meaningful passive sentence.

c. *Wrong part of speech*

In English, the main parts of speech are noun, pronoun, adjective, determiner, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. Part of speech knowledge is an important subject area that students should know because they show how words are related to each other. It is one of the important components in studying any language. Part of speech helps students to understand and use the target language more efficiently. Some students cannot speak English effectively if their part of speech knowledge is limited. This problem seems to obstruct their learning of English because parts of speech are an important element in the acquisition of a second language.

Saying adjectives after nouns is a common error that students often make. Instead of saying, "She is a beautiful girl." they say, "She is a girl beautiful." Using the wrong part of speech causes others to underestimate the speaking level. Besides, students are also often confused when determining part of speech. The reason is that they cannot remember all the rules of nouns, adjectives, or verbs.

Each part of speech serves a specific function in a sentence to impart a complete thought. Using appropriately the parts of speech in English communication can help to understand greatly. Therefore, students must be careful in determining the right words while speaking to avoid being misunderstood by others.

*d) Previous studies*

When speaking English, students make many errors. The following previous studies will be evidence to support that claim.

The first one mentioned in the research "How to help first-year English majors at Hai Phong University avoid common mistakes in speaking lessons" by Khong (2018). This research was conducted by 48 freshmen from 3 English-majored classes of Hai Phong Private University. The researcher applied quantitative techniques of data to analyze the result of the questionnaire. After that, she summarized all results into table and chart form. Each chart and table showed how many students have chosen the suitable answer in each questionnaire. The purpose of this study was to recognize features of speaking skills and some common errors that students made when learning speaking skills. The results of this research showed that students made errors in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Thereby, the researcher suggested some methods to solve these problems.

Next is the research about "Vocational College Students' Common Errors in English Speaking Performance" by Fitriani and Zulkarnain (2019). This research aimed to find out the common errors made by students studying at one of the vocational colleges in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The students' opinions on their experiences of learning English, particularly in speaking, were also explored. This qualitative-quantitative technique was done by collecting some recordings of student conversations and distributing questionnaires about some common errors for participants to fill out. There were 50 students who participated in this research. The result was concluded that students at Vocational College made two common errors as pronunciation and grammar.

Thanks to those studies, researchers have found some common mistakes when speaking English so that learners can overcome and develop their skills in the best way.

## III. Research Methodology

This chapter shows the process of the study. It consists of the design, participants, and instruments.

*a) Research Design*

The research "Common Errors in Speaking of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University, Vietnam" was conducted to answer the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative were used to find out the common errors when speaking of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University. The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect information. These students provided very useful information by answering questions in the questionnaire. Then, the data was collected and analyzed to get the final result. In addition, the participants were chose randomly to get some more detailed information by answering the questions in the interview paper. Participants might be useful as a follow-up strategy to certain responses to the questionnaire.

*b) Participants*

In this study, the participants were 80 sophomores from three English language courses 14 at Tay Do University. There were 52 females and 28 males



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who participated in the research. Their ages ranged from 20 to 21. They all live in the Mekong Delta. Besides, Vietnamese was their mother tongue, and English as their foreign language. At the time of the research, this group of students was exposed to speaking skills, so they could give an overview of common errors when speaking. They all studied the Speak now 3 book (by Jack C. Richards and David Bohlke, Oxford). With the dedication of the foreign teachers, students had an opportunity to participate in the improvement process by practicing speaking with classmates and teachers through diverse topics which are close to their life, such as People, Vacation, Business and so on.

*c) Instruments*

The instruments used in this research were the questionnaire and the interview, which was taken from English-majored sophomores of Tay Do University to find out their errors in an English speaking process. The questionnaire and the interview were delivered to them with a clear and careful explanation to collect the students' ideas.

i. *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire was used as the most useful and important instrument for many reasons. First, this was the best way to get a lot of information from many people in a short time. Second, it was easier and quicker to quantify the research. The questionnaire used simple English words and was translated carefully to avoid students' misunderstanding, which influenced the analysis results. It consisted of 9 multiple-choice questions and 39 statements in a table with 5 points scale: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree, and it is classified into the following group:

*Table 1:* The gist of questionnaire

| Question/Statement | Summary of the question's/statement's content |
|---|---|
| a. From 1 to 5 | Students' background |
| b. From 6 to 9 | Errors in speaking |
| c. From 10 to 20 | Pronunciation errors |
| d. From 21 to 29 | Vocabulary errors |
| e. From 30 to 39 | Grammar errors |

ii. *Interview*

The interview was designed to get specific information from the sophomores about errors when speaking English. It included three questions. Ten students were randomly selected out of 80 students that took part in the survey. This instrument aimed to confirm errors and to understand the students' attitude towards speaking English.

## IV. Results and Discussion

This section shows the results of the whole research. The final results are drawn to analyze the data collected from 80 English-majored sophomores mentioned in the previous chapter. The results consist of the results from the questionnaire and the interview, and the discussion.

*a) Results from the questionnaire*

The results from the questionnaire were collected for the same purpose, which is determining some common errors in speaking English of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University and answering the question: "What common errors do the English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University often encounter in speaking?". Indeed, after collecting and analyzing the data from the questionnaire, there are some important information and reasons causing errors while speaking English of students, including students' attitudes, the importance of English speaking according to students' thoughts, and common errors in speaking English.

i. *Students' Background*

a. *Students' year of learning English*

To realize the students' level and knowledge, it is necessary to get information about learning English. The following figure shows the participants' year of learning English calculated from this year (2021).

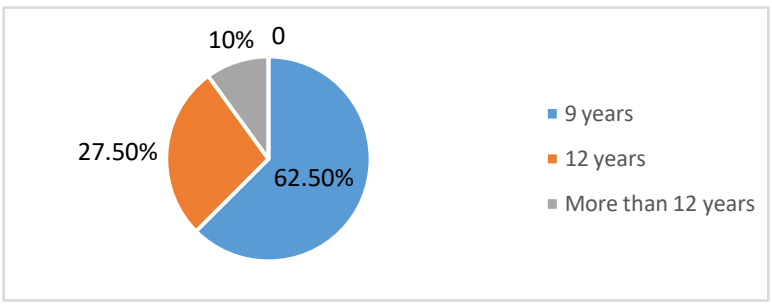


*Figure 1:* Students' year of learning English



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Looking at figure 1; the biggest portion accounted for 62.5% of students who have learned English for nine years. This meant that they have been learning English since 6th grade, and they had seven years studying English before going to university. Students who have studied English for 12 years and more than 12 years accounted for 27.5% and 10%, respectively. Thus, they must have had basic English knowledge.

In summary, the percentage of students learning English for 12 years or more was much lower than that of students learning English for nine years. This showed that the time to learn English also affected the process of learning speaking.

b. *The most difficult skill in English*

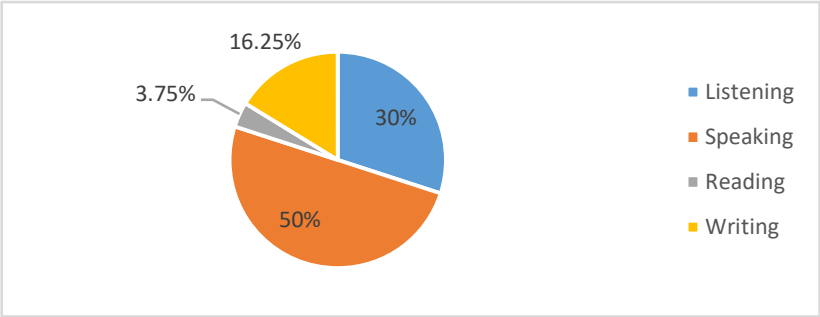


*Figure 2:* The most difficult skill in English

After collecting data, it was recognized that half of the sophomores thought that speaking was the most difficult skill. With the highest rate of 50%, it was certain that the participants usually made errors when speaking English. The second highest percentage was listening, account for 30%. Another was reading 3.75% and writing 16.25%. This shows that the English speaking of sophomores is still very limited. They need to pay more attention to speaking skills to improve themselves.

c. *The importance of speaking English*

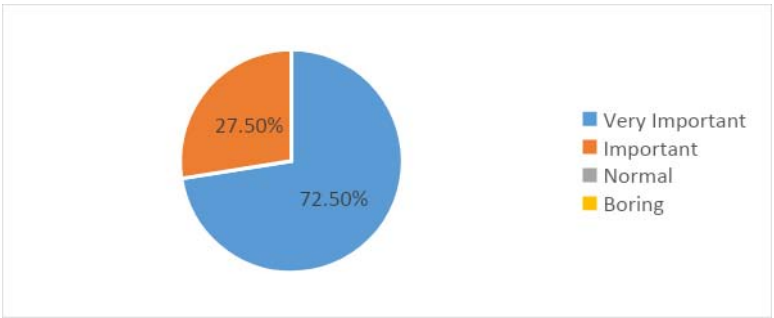


*Figure 3:* The importance of speaking English

Figure 3 shows that the majority of students appreciated learning English, especially speaking skills. It could be seen from the 72.5% of students who thought speaking English was very important. The remaining 27.5% said it was only important. No one marked that speaking was normal or boring. In general, most students consider it necessary to learn to speak English. This is a very positive thing for the students participating in this research.

d. *Students' English speaking proficiency*

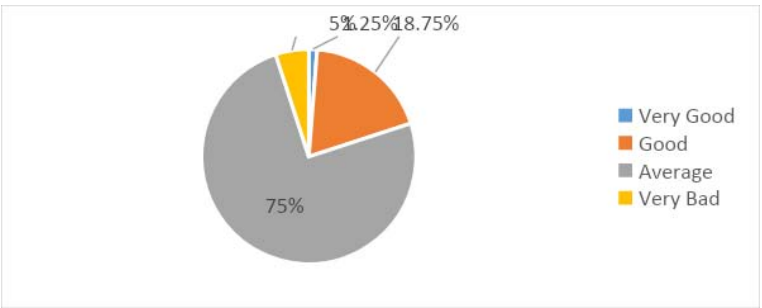


*Figure 4:* Students' English speaking proficiency



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English speaking is one of the main factors used to assess students' English proficiency. However, to be able to speak English fluently, students need a long process. If they are only worried about poor English proficiency and do not try, they will never become good English communicators. Most students have moderate and poor English acquisition. About 75% of students felt that their speaking skills were average, and 5% of students rated themselves as very bad. Only 1.25% is very good, and 18.75% is good. This shows that only a few students excel and are confident with their English speaking ability. The survey results show that most of the students would make errors when speaking English.

e. *The influence of the mother tongue while speaking English*

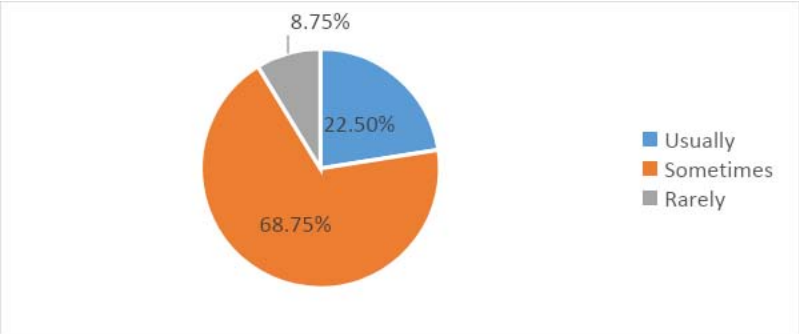


*Figure 5:* The influence of the mother tongue while speaking English

It could be seen that the number of students affected by mother language accounted for a large number. The proof was that 68.75% of students choose sometimes, and 22.5% choose usually. Only 8.75% chose rarely. This shows why students do not speak English well because they are influenced by the Vietnamese language. Vietnamese has no complicated structure; students often apply the "Word-by-Word" rule in English without knowing if that is true or not.

ii. *Common errors in speaking English*

Some common errors of sophomores in speaking English were pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Let's see Figure 6 below.

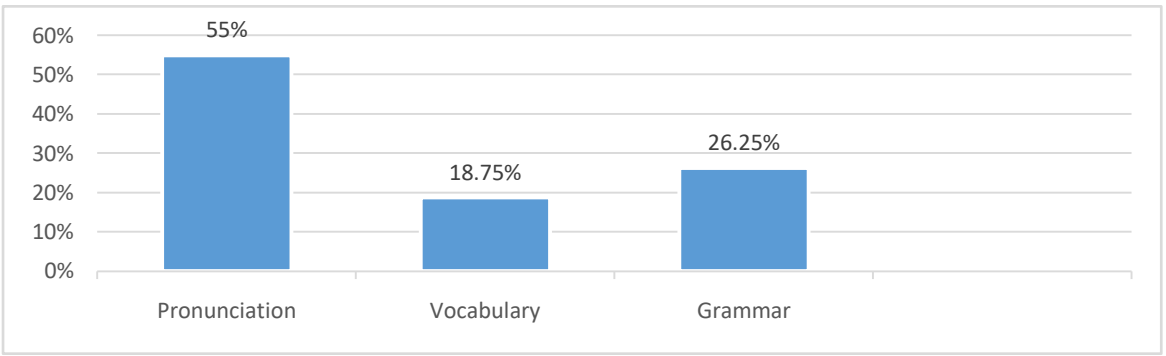


*Figure 6:* Common errors in speaking English

As it can be seen from Figure 6, students who made errors in pronunciation were 55%. This is the highest percentage that shows pronunciation is a big error for students in speaking. There were 26.25% of the participants admitted that they made errors in vocabulary. Moreover, 18.75% of the remaining students claimed that they were not good at grammar in the process of speaking.

Overall, it can be easily seen that the pronunciation percentage is quite high. Therefore, they cannot communicate well because of many errors in speaking English, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. That is also the purpose of this research; it is needed to find out students' errors and help them improve their speaking skills.

a. *Pronunciation errors*

The pronunciation was one of the common errors in speaking that rated up to 55% (Figure 6). Some errors that students made, such as final sounds, word stress, and intonation.



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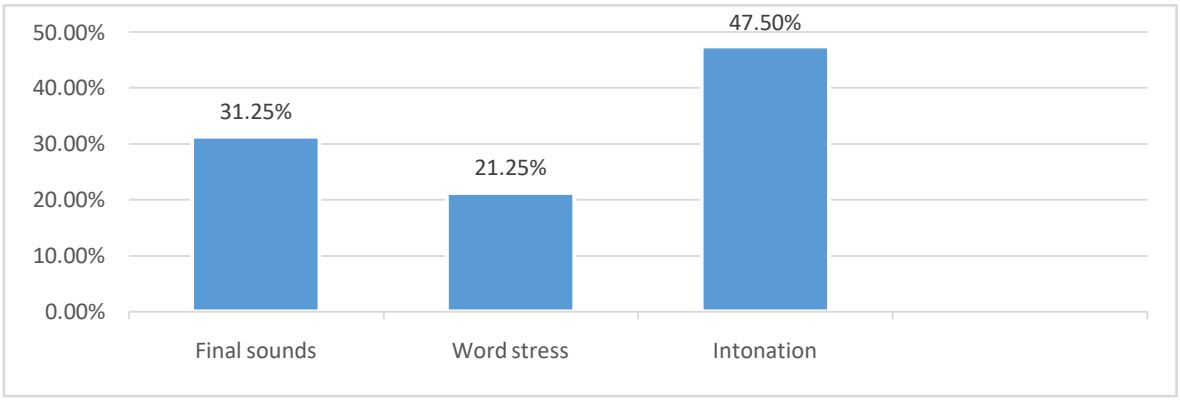


*Figure 7:* Pronunciation errors

Figure 7 showed that 31.25% of sophomores made errors with the final sounds, 21.25% of them chose word stress. Furthermore, students who made errors in the intonation were 47.5% (the highest percentage). Let's see Table 2 below.

*Table 2:* Errors in final sounds

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Final sounds are very important in speaking. | 50% | 38.75% | 10% | 1.25% | 0% |
| 11. You do not often pronounce the final sounds. | 12.5% | 43.75% | 22.5% | 16.25% | 5% |
| 12. You usually forget the way how to pronounce /-s/ and /-ed/ sounds. | 18.75% | 35% | 28.75% | 12.5% | 5% |
| 13. You cannot pronounce differently between the /s/ and /z/ sounds. | 12.5% | 38.75% | 26.25% | 20% | 2.5% |

From table 2, most students agreed with statement 10, "Final sounds are very important in speaking." with 50% strongly agreed and 38.75% agreed. In statement 11, "You do not often pronounce the final sounds.", 12.5% of students chose strongly agreed, and 43.75% of them agreed. About 18.75% strongly agreed, and 35% agreed with statement 12, "You usually forget how to pronounce /-s/ and /-ed/ sounds.", 12.5% of students disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed with this. No idea accounted for 28.75%. Moreover, in statement 13, "You cannot pronounce differently between the /s/ and /z/ sounds." the strongly agreed percentage was 12.5%, and 38.75% agreed.

*Table 3:* Errors in word stress

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Word stress is an important element in speaking English. | 37.5% | 57.5% | 5% | 0% | 0% |
| 15. You usually stress the wrong parts of words. | 18.75% | 42.5% | 26.25% | 10% | 2.5% |
| 16. Wrong word stress will lead to misinterpretation of the word. | 37.5% | 47.5% | 11.25% | 3.75% | 0% |

From table 3, 95% of students agreed with statement 14, "Word stress is an important element in speaking English." But most of them agreed with statement 15, "You usually stress the wrong parts of words" (18.75% strongly agreed and 42.5% agreed). In statement 16, "Wrong word stress will lead to misinterpretation of the word." 37.5% of students strongly agreed, and 47.5% agreed.

*Table 4:* Errors in intonation

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. You do not use intonation when you are speaking English. | 21.25% | 32.5% | 25% | 16.25% | 5% |
| 18. You do not often raise your voice at the end of a yes/no question. | 25% | 28.75% | 26.25% | 17.5% | 2.5% |
| 19. Using intonation will make the listeners feel more attractive. | 55% | 31.25% | 13.75% | 0% | 0% |
| 20. Intonation errors are caused by mother tongue. | 22.5% | 55% | 16.25% | 6.25% | 0% |



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Besides, from table 4, intonation was also a big problem for the students. In statement 17, "You do not use intonation when you are speaking English." the strongly agreed and agreed percentage was 21.25% and 32.5%. No idea accounted for 25%. Moreover, more than half of the students (53.75%) stated that "You did not often raise their voice at the end of a yes/no question." Only a few students disagreed with this (20%). Most students agreed that "Using intonation will make the listeners feel more attractive" in statement 19, with 55% students strongly agreed and 31.25% agreed. Last but not least, there were 22.5% of students who chose strongly agreed, and 55% chose agreed with statement 20, "Intonation errors are caused by mother tongue." Because intonation in Vietnamese and English has a huge difference.

To sum up, sophomores made some errors when speaking, such as final sounds, word stress, and intonation, in which intonation was the highest. They need to focus on these errors to find the best ways to improve their speaking skill.

b. *Vocabulary errors*

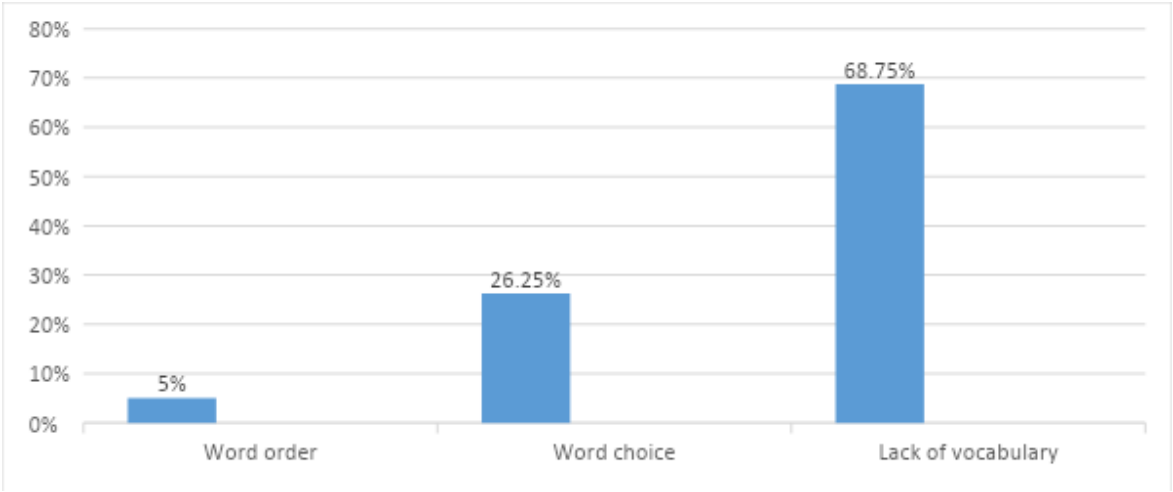


*Figure 8:* Vocabulary errors

Vocabulary is also an important element to make students communicate well. However, from figure 6, it can be seen that errors in vocabulary were up 18.75%. Look at figure 8; about 5% of students made errors in word order, 26.25% made errors in word choice. The remaining students, 68.75%, made errors in lack of vocabulary. Let' see Table 5.

*Table 5:* Errors in word order

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. Word order is one of the main points in making sentences. | 27.5% | 56.25% | 8.75% | 7.5% | 0% |
| 22. You do not know how to put the words according to the rules. | 23.75% | 35% | 28.75% | 12.5% | 0% |
| 23. Saying out of word order will easily be misinterpreted by others. | 31.25% | 47.5% | 20% | 1.25% | 0% |

From table 5, there were 27.5% of the total sophomores strongly agreed, and 56.25% agreed with statement 21, "Word order is one of the main points in making sentences." About 23.75% strongly agreed, and 35% agreed with statement 22, "You do not know how to put the words according to the rules." Neutral accounted for 28.75% of students. Furthermore, more than half of students agreed with statement 23, "Saying out of word order will easily be misinterpreted by others." which was 31.25% strongly agreed and 47.5% agreed.

*Table 6:* Errors in word choice

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24. You often repeat a word while you speak. | 30% | 47.5% | 12.5% | 10% | 0% |
| 25. You often get confused between synonyms. | 27.5% | 46.25% | 20% | 5% | 1.25% |
| 26. You often use words in the wrong context. | 12.5% | 53.75% | 23.75% | 8.75% | 1.25% |



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In table 6, repeating a word while speaking of sophomores was unavoidable. Evidence is 30% of students chose strongly agreed, and 47.5% chose agreed with statement 24 "You often repeat a word while you speak." Because English had so many synonyms, they were also common errors for sophomores while speaking. In statement 25, "You often get confused between synonyms." There were 27.5% strongly agreed, and 46.25% agreed. 12.5% of the students strongly agreed, and 53.75% agreed with statement 26, "You often use words in the wrong context."

*Table 7:* Errors in lack of vocabulary

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. You cannot show your ideas because of poor vocabulary. | 32.5% | 50% | 10% | 6.25% | 1.25% |
| 28. Lacking vocabulary makes you not communicate well. | 37.5% | 40% | 15% | 1.25% | 1.25% |
| 29. You often use academic words when speaking English. | 0% | 22.5% | 32.5% | 25% | 20% |

Table 7 showed another error, it was lack of vocabulary. Most students agreed with statement 27, "You cannot show your ideas because of poor vocabulary." (32.5% strongly agreed and 50% agreed). "Lacking vocabulary makes you not communicate well." there were 37.5% strongly agreed, and 40% agreed with this statement. The last one was statement 29, "You often use academic words when speaking English." about 25% chose agreed. No idea accounted for 32.5%. 45% of the remaining students who chose disagreed.

As the analyzed data, the biggest error was lack of vocabulary. This was the main reason why students did not feel confident when communicating with others in English. In short, wrong word order, wrong word choice, and lack of vocabulary can be confusing for listeners. So, students should try to learn more vocabulary and pay attention to word structures.

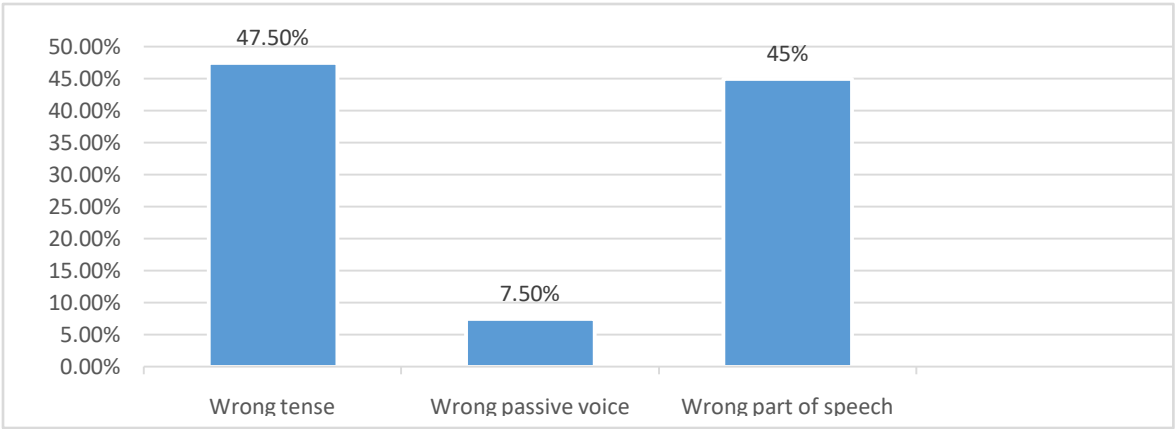


*Figure 9:* Grammar errors

From figure 6, grammar structure was also one of the common errors in speaking that rated up to 26.25%. Some errors in grammar that students made as wrong tense, wrong passive voice, and wrong part of speech.

Figure 9 showed that 47.5% of sophomores made errors with the tenses, 7.5% of them had difficulties with passive voice. Furthermore, students who made errors in part of speech were 45%. Let's see Table 8 below.

*Table 8:* Errors in wrong tense

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30. Tense is essential when speaking English. | 32.5% | 41.25% | 21.25% | 5% | 0% |
| 31. You often forget appropriate tenses when you are speaking. | 17.5% | 33.75% | 25% | 23.75% | 0% |
| 32. You do not remember the structures of tenses. | 21.25% | 25% | 26.25% | 20% | 7.5% |

As can be seen from table 8, about 32.5% of students strongly agreed, and 41.25% agreed with statement 30, "Tense is essential when speaking English." 51.25% of students agreed that "You often forget appropriate tenses when you are speaking." (17.5% of students strongly agreed, and 33.75% agreed). Only a few students (about 23.75%) disagreed with this. With statement 32, "You do not remember the



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structures of tenses." 21.25% of students chose strongly agreed, and 25% chose agreed. Neutral accounted for 26.25%.

*Table 9:* Errors in wrong passive voice

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. Passive voice is a highly useful form in speaking English. | 28.75% | 58.75% | 8.75% | 2.5% | 1.25% |
| 34. You usually forget the structure changing from active to passive voice. | 27.5% | 36.25% | 16.25% | 18.75% | 1.25% |
| 35. You are usually confused about the use of tenses in the passive voice. | 21.25% | 47.5% | 17.5% | 12.5% | 1.25% |

Next, from table 9, another error in grammar was the passive voice; most of the students agreed with statement 33, "Passive voice is a highly useful form in speaking English." with 28.75% strongly agreed, and 58.75% agreed. Students agreed with statement 34, "You usually forget the structure changing from active to passive voice." with 27.5% strongly agreed and 36.25% agreed. In addition, there were 21.25% of the total sophomores strongly agreed, and 47.5% agreed with statement 35, "You are usually confused about the use of tenses in the passive voice."

*Table 10:* Errors in wrong part of speech

| Statements | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 37. Part of speech is an important part in English. | 31.25% | 52.5% | 16.25% | 0% | 0% |
| 38. You usually say adjective after the noun. | 7.5% | 27.5% | 22.5% | 36.25% | 6.25% |
| 39. Using the wrong part of speech will cause others to underestimate your speaking level. | 25% | 50% | 21.25% | 2.5% | 1.25% |
| 40. You are often confused when defining the part of speech. | 21.25% | 52.5% | 17.5% | 7.5% | 1.25% |

From table 10, the last error was the wrong part of speech; more than half of the sophomores (83.75%) stated that "Part of speech is an important part in English." which was a very high percentage. Also, statement 37, "You usually say adjective after the noun." had 42.5% of the participants strongly disagreed and disagreed. Only about 35% of students agreed with this. In statement 38, "Using the wrong part of speech will cause others to underestimate your speaking level." 25% of students strongly agreed, and 50% agreed. No idea accounted for 21.25%. Moreover, "You are often confused when defining the part of speech." was a common error of sophomores. 21.25% of students chose strongly agreed, and 52.5% agreed with this.

According to the analyzed data from Figure 9, using the correct part of speech was the greatest challenge for students in grammar. When using the wrong part of speech, the listeners could not understand, and they estimated students' speaking skill was bad. To sum up, grammar is an important factor in speaking, so students should pay attention to grammar structures if they want to have good speaking skills.

*b) Results from the interview*

Ten students in a total of eighty sophomores were randomly selected to make interview questions. The paper interview consists of three questions: the first question is the attitude of students when speaking English, the next one is the errors that students make when speaking English and the last question is the ways to improve their speaking skills.

In question 1, "Do you like speaking English? Why or why not?" All students said that they liked speaking English. Specifically, three students said that "I like speaking because I can communicate with native speakers." Moreover, two students also shared that speaking English could help them to find a job with a high salary. Another opinion was, "I like speaking because I just love English. I love it".

In the second question, "Do you often make errors when speaking English?" All students stated that they often made errors when speaking English because of many reasons. For example, a student said that "Speaking is very difficult. I cannot have enough vocabulary to show my thought, and I do not pronounce well". Furthermore, students thought that speaking was the most difficult skill because they often made errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

The last question "What do you do to improve your speaking skill?" Students said that they should learn more new words to improve their vocabulary. Besides, they could read English books or newspapers to expand their knowledge. Practicing speaking English every day also helped students improve their speaking skills.



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To sum up, the English-majored sophomores in Tay Do University still have many problems with pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. They should practice speaking English more to have good speaking skills.

*c) Discussion*

After analyzing data from English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University, there was a lot of important information essential for the research. To begin with students' years of learning English, most of them studied English for a long time, ranging from 9 to 12 years, the remaining students studied more than 12 years. It could be said that their English was good, but not sure their speaking skill. Half of the students stated that speaking was the most difficult skill because it required many factors, and speaking was also an important skill in learning English. 75% of students rated that their speaking skills were average, only 20% believed their speaking skill was good. It was easy to see that they made some errors in speaking English. There were 68.75% of students influenced by their mother tongue. As in the results, three main causes, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, made sophomores not communicate well.

Firstly, the pronunciation was an important factor when speaking. Students often did not pronounce the final sounds, which could lead the listeners to misunderstand. The word stress was also an error for students leading to their words misinterpreted. More than half of the sophomores (47.5%) thought that their intonation errors were caused by their mother tongue. Not using intonation in English could make listeners feel bored.

Secondly, vocabulary was another factor that students often made errors. Most students believed that word order was an important element to create meaningful sentences (83.75%). Saying out of word order would be easily misinterpreted. Choosing words in the wrong contents was also an error for students. Another error was lacking vocabulary. Students could not communicate well because of a lack of vocabulary; it was why they could not express their thoughts and feelings clearly. They would feel confused when communicating with others.

Finally, students also made grammar errors. Using wrong tenses in English could make listeners confused about the meaning. Most students remembered the tense structures, but they were confused when choosing the appropriate tense to use. In addition, more than half of students (87.5%) agreed that passive voice was a highly useful form in speaking English. However, the passive voice structure in Vietnamese was easier than in English. That was the reason why most of the students avoided using passive voice structures while speaking English. Some of them expressed that sometimes they could not speak fluently because of the passive voice structures. Furthermore, students often did not know the functions and rules of parts of speech, so they could use the wrong word that made the listeners not understand. The subject-verb arrangement was also an error for students leading to their ungrammatical sentences.

To sum up, English majored sophomores at Tay Do University faced many errors in speaking, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Students need to find out their errors and the ways how to improve their speaking skills. Besides, they also have to practice speaking English regularly and looking for foreigners to communicate with.

## V. Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

*a) Conclusions*

The aim of this study was to find out some common errors in speaking of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University. At the beginning, the main questions of this research were posed.

Half of sophomores thought that speaking was the most difficult and important skill. They evaluated their speaking as average because they made some common errors in their speaking process. Specifically, they included three main kinds of errors such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

In terms of pronunciation, students made some errors about final sounds, word stress, and intonation. The first problem was the lack of the final sound and the mispronouncing of the final sounds. These errors caused the listeners to misinterpret the meaning that students wanted to express. Besides, students also stressed the wrong parts of words. Some of them said that they did not know clearly about the word stress rules in English. Last but not least, speaking English with a flat tone was another common error of students. This was the reason why students could not speak English fluently and naturally.

In terms of vocabulary, students said that they made some errors about word order, word choice, and lack of vocabulary. Firstly, students did not know how to put the words in the good rules, and saying out of word order made others misunderstand. In addition, students confessed that they usually put words in the wrong context and got confused between synonyms. Finally, lack of vocabulary made students could not communicate well. They could not show their ideas because of a poor vocabulary.

In terms of grammar, students confessed that they made some errors about tenses, passive voice structures, and parts of speech. Students expressed that they often forgot appropriate tenses while speaking and they did not remember the structures. Moreover, students were not able to speak fluently because of the passive voice structures. They usually avoided using it



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and felt confused about the use of tenses in the passive voice. Finally, English-majored sophomores said that they sometimes said adjectives after nouns and were confused when defining the part of speech.

*b) Implications*

First of all, the results of "Common Errors in Speaking of English-Majored Sophomores at Tay Do University, Vietnam." shows the importance of speaking skills in learning and in finding good jobs for the future. Students can recognize their errors and find out the way to improve their speaking skills while answering the questionnaire. Secondly, speaking teachers can base on the results of this research to figure out the problems of their students to give them the most suitable learning method. Moreover, other researchers may refer to this research to carry out another study that could not only help students learn English better but also improve their English speaking skills.

*c) Recommendations*

Basing on the results of the research, several recommendations are given for further researchers. Firstly, it is necessary to study more deeply about how to help students overcome errors in the English speaking process or find out some effective learning methods for students to improve their speaking skills. Furthermore, prospective researchers are encouraged to research other errors while speaking and correct them to help students reach higher levels of speaking skills.

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