

# DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION AMONG ENGLISH NON-MAJORS AT VAN LANG UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT:

Speaking skill plays an important part in learning English. Speaking English well helps learners succeed in their future work. Although many studies about English speaking have been conducted recently to improve the English communication skills of students, the implementation of these studies' solutions has gained poor results. In this study, questionnaires are used to explore how non-English major students at Van Lang University learn English speaking skill. This study's findings are practical to apply in the English teaching practice at Van Lang University and other places having similar contexts.

**Key words:** Speaking skill, English learning, non- English majors, practice.

## 1. Introduction

In company with the current socio-economic development and in order to meet the needs of employers as well as graduation requirements from universities in Vietnam, students have to communicate well in English. Over some semesters since the Language Institute of Van Lang University instructed to apply changes to the form of the final examinations in English for non-majors, most of the students have faced with many difficulties despite the fact that many of them have ever tried more. This article is carried out to find out the answers on the question:

What difficulties have English non-majors at Van Lang University ever met when learning English communication?

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Definition of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to Richards (1986), CLT is a style of language instruction basing on the idea that communication is the primary goal of language use. A second or foreign language approach stresses interaction as the primary method and the result of language learning. Additionally, the fundamental goal is for students to become better communicators who can apply macro strategies, or methodological principles for communication, to real-life contexts. Because students frequently want to talk about topics that are extremely important to them, teachers can create scenarios the mirror what students encounter in real life

during the classroom activities that are led by this method.

## **2.2. The basic principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

A method of teaching language known as Communicative Language Teaching was developed in the 1970s and 1980s, and it has ever placed an emphasis on understanding the structure, meaning, and purpose of language as well as the capacity of language learners to put that knowledge to use. The foundation of Communicative Approach has been considered as language communication, referring to both learning processes and objectives of the classrooms, (Canale and Swain, 1980). Communicative competence is the primary theoretical idea behind the Communicative Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). By mastering four dimensions-grammatical competence, strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence, (Canale and Swain, 1980) claimed that this strategy was successful. Knowing both verbal and nonverbal techniques, and it is a component of strategic competency. According to Holmes (1994), dealing with the complicated issues requires language problem-solving and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is what Chomsky names linguistic competence and what Hymes intends to be formally possible - the interaction of grammatical system of competence.

## **2.3. Factors affecting learning English communication**

According to Bashiruddin (2018), there are five elements having an influence on learning English Communication. They are (1) motivation; (2) vocabulary; (3) excessive use of mother-tongue; (4) anxiety; and (5) confidence.

### **2.3.1. Motivation**

Bashiruddin (2018) thought that a lack of enthusiasm could prevent learners from actively participating in speaking activities. It results in unwillingness to actively participate in speaking activities, which results no practice at all.

### **2.3.2. Vocabulary**

According to Bashiruddin (2018), the next issue

with English non-majors is that they frequently need to look for the right word. In fact, they cannot locate one that fits the situation or material. This is a result of limited exposure to various vocabulary. This further results in an inability to communicate clearly in English, which again results in a loss of confidence and a lack of drive to speak. As a result, students frequently use filler words in their talks and conversations or construct unfinished sentences.

### **2.3.3. Excessive use of mother-tongue**

According to Bashiruddin (2018), when it comes to speaking and writing, two tasks that involve developing productive skills, learners often have a tendency to employ their mother tongue excessively. When the students are asked to participate in a speaking activity, they tend to immediately begin thinking about the subject in their mother tongue, frame what they want to say there, and then translate it into English, which frequently leads to mistakes. In addition, students frequently use their mother tongue, which makes them lose interest in learning the language and prevents them from getting enough practice.

### **2.3.4. Anxiety**

According to Bashiruddin (2018), anxiety frequently results from speaking a foreign language in public, especially in front of native speakers. Extreme anxiety can occasionally cause learners to become tongue-tied or speechless in an unexpected situation, which might discourage them and make them feel generally unsuccessful. Adults are far more concerned about speaking incorrectly than youngsters are. Making mistakes would be a clear opportunity to lose face for them because it would be a public display of ignorance.

### **2.3.5. Confidence**

According to (Bashiruddin, 2018), the development of the learners' confidence is the next crucial factor. Building the learners' confidence is crucial when the teacher develops a strong rapport with them. Starting with straightforward things will help you achieve this. The motivation of the slow learners will be raised as a result of being encouraged to participate in the

activity. Gradually raising the level of difficulty will help learners become better by honing their expertise. It will also motivate the students to limit teacher talk time while increasing student talk time. Instead of correcting the errors, the teacher could use peer correction to help the students lose their inhibitions.

**3. Research design**

This article has been done to find the answer to the following question: “What difficulties have English non-majors at Van Lang University ever met with their learning English communication?”

**3.1. Research method**

In order to reach the purposes of the study, the researcher conducted a survey on an English non-major class with thirty-five students among three classes that the researcher is teaching. The main method, namely questionnaire was employed to collect data relevant to aspects as mentioned. The quantitative approach was used to gather a collection of data from questionnaire so as to find out the answers to the question raised above.

**3.2. Participants for the research**

Thirty-five students of the English non-major class include 15 males and 20 females. The researcher drew lots among three classes for choosing participants for this study Table 1 above

shows their background. Having a quick look at the table 1, the students come from different classes such as 6 students of Public Relationship (17.1%); 14 students of tourism (40%); 5 students of International Trade (14.3%); and 10 students of Nursing (28.6% for each).

**3.3. Data collection**

The data in this study were collected through questionnaire: the opinions on difficulties that English non-majors at Van Lang University have ever met when learning English communication. Mean will be used as the method in this study.

**4. Discussion and implications**

The study investigated the English communication of a class with thirty-five English majors at Van Lang University. The collected data from questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted.

**4.1. Students’ English communication learning**

Table 2 below reported the responses questionnaire. It is easy to realize that the majority of the students expressed an agreement with all items of question 1: the students learned English communication to (1) communicate with foreigners with (M = 1.9); (2) have a good job in the future with (M = 1.9); (3) travel to other countries with (M = 1.8); (4) get certificate on English as required with (M = 1.7); (5) understand English songs and read English

**Table 1. Summary of the students' background in the English non-major class**

No of the students of class N = 35 (15 males; 20 females)	Current classes			
	Public Relationship	Tourism	International trade	Nursing
	6 (17.1%)	14 (40%)	5 (14.3%)	10 (28.6%)

**Table 2. Students English communication learning**

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES		SA 1	A 2	N 3	D 4	SD 5	Mean
1	You learn English communication to						
1	communicate with foreigners	4	30	1	0	0	1.9
2	have a good job in the future	3	31	1	0	0	1.9
3	travel to other countries	11	20	4	0	0	1.8
4	get certificate on English as required	9	26	0	0	0	1.7
5	understand English songs and read English books	7	25	1	1	1	2.0

books with (M = 2.0). The percentage shows that most of the students learn English communication as a condition required for their graduation.

**4.2. Difficulties that the students have ever met with their learning English communication**

The summary of questionnaire on difficulties that the students have ever met when learning English communication was presented in the Table 3 on page 5. It is obvious from table 3 that most of the students agreed with all items. They all meet six difficult issues when learning English communication as (1) pronunciation with (M = 1.9); (2) lack of vocabulary and grammatical structures with (M = 1.9); (3) anxiety with (M = 1.9); (4) lack of motivation with (M = 1.8); (5) excessive use of mother-tongue with (M = 1.8); and (6) lack of confidence with (M = 1.8).

In sum, most of the students have ever met difficulties with their learning English communication such as poor pronunciation, lack of vocabulary and grammatical structures, anxiety, lack of motivation, excessive use of mother-tongue, and lack of confidence.

**4.3. The importance of English communication learning**

It was evident that Table 4 showed the students attitudes towards the importance of English communication learning. Most of them think that learning English in order to cope with the examinations with (M = 1.7), and they think English learning is very necessary with (M = 1.9). Moreover, many of them agree that English communication learning is very important with (M = 1.8). However, they do not think English communication learning is normal with (M = 2.3).

It can be concluded that English communication learning is quite necessary and very important for their graduation and future job.

**4.4. The students opinion towards to interaction with others when learning English communication**

In general, the students always wish to communicate in English with their teachers with (M = 1.8) and foreigners with (M = 1.9). They agree that communicating in English with their parents and brothers or sisters is great with (M = 1.6). Many of them also agree that working with

**Table 3. Difficulties that the students have ever met when learning English communication**

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES		SA1	A2	N3	D4	SD5	Mean
2	Difficulties that you have ever met when learning English communication						
1	Poor pronunciation and grammatical structures	3	31	1	0	0	1.9
2	Lack of vocabulary	2	33	0	0		1.9
3	Anxiety	3	32	0	0	0	1.9
4	Lack of motivation	6	28	1	0	0	1.8
5	Excessive use of mother-tongue	6	29	0	0	0	1.8
6	Lack of confidence	7	28	0	0	0	1.8

**Table 4. The importance of English communication learning**

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES		SA1	A2	N3	D4	SD5	Mean
3	English communication learning is						
1	very necessary	4	30	1	0	0	1.9
2	very important	7	27	1	0	0	1.8
3	normal	4	25	0	3	3	2.3
4	to cope with the examinations	9	26	0	0	0	1.7

**Table 5. The students' opinions towards to interaction with others when learning English communication**

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES		SA 1	A 2	N 3	D 4	SD 5	Mean
4	You like communicating in English with						
1	teachers	9	25	1	0	0	1.8
2	foreigners	5	30	0	0	0	1.9
3	parents and brothers or sisters	13	20	1	1	0	1.6
4	friends	13	22	0	0	0	1.6

friends is the best ways for them to develop English communication with (M = 1.6). Therefore, it is very necessary to have a learning environment where they can practice the language learned.

### 5. Conclusion

Nowadays English has become an international language, and it is the best means to contact with

other people. Besides, communicating in English is considered as an essential element for anyone to master. Relating to the situation is that English non-majors at Van Lang university can recognize difficult issues of their learning English communication. They hope that they will try all their best to have good English communication in their learning ■

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## **CÁC KHÓ KHĂN ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN KHÔNG THUỘC CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH TẠI ĐẠI HỌC VĂN LANG KHI HỌC TIẾNG ANH GIAO TIẾP**

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### **TÓM TẮT:**

Kỹ năng nói đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc học tiếng Anh. Kỹ năng nói tốt sẽ giúp người học thành công trong công việc sau này. Mặc dù đã có nhiều nghiên cứu được tiến hành trong thời gian gần đây về việc nói tiếng Anh nhằm cải thiện khả năng giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh của sinh viên, nhưng việc triển khai các giải pháp vẫn chưa đạt được thành công như mong đợi. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng phiếu điều tra để khám phá cách học tiếng Anh của các sinh viên không thuộc chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại Đại học Văn Lang. Các kết quả của nghiên cứu này có thể áp dụng vào việc học và giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại Đại học Văn Lang cũng như các nơi có bối cảnh tương tự.

**Từ khoá:** Kỹ năng nói, học tiếng Anh, không thuộc chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, thực hành.