



**SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE FRESHMEN'S PARTICIPATION
IN DISCUSSION OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS TRAINING
AT HANOI UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY**

Dang Thị Thanh Van

Hanoi University of Business and Technology

Email address: dangthanhvan1968@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Of all the four skills, speaking is one of the skills which is very important to be mastered by most language learners. This descriptive quantitative study was conducted with 69 representative first-year non-English major students at Hanoi University of Business and Technology during the second term of the 2022-2023 academic years. The results revealed that most of the participants had a low level of English which deterred them from active participation in English-speaking lessons. Moreover, despite finding it challenging to take part in discussion activities, they still wanted teachers to give them more chances to participate in. The findings would be served as resourceful references to whom concerned.



TỰ ĐÁNH GIÁ VỀ VIỆC THAM GIA THẢO LUẬN LUYỆN TẬP KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC KINH DOANH VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HÀ NỘI

Đặng Thị Thanh Vân

Trường Đại học Kinh doanh và Công nghệ Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Địa chỉ email: dangthanhvan1968@gmail.com

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Từ khóa:

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Tóm tắt

Trong bốn kỹ năng chính của tiếng Anh, kỹ năng Nói tiếng Anh là một trong những kỹ năng rất quan trọng mà hầu hết người học ngôn ngữ phải thành thạo. Nghiên cứu định lượng mô tả được thực hiện với 69 đại diện sinh viên năm thứ nhất không chuyên tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Kinh doanh và Công nghệ Hà Nội trong học kỳ 2 năm học 2022 - 2023. Kết quả cho thấy hầu hết những người tham gia đều có trình độ tiếng Anh thấp, điều này sẽ là trở ngại khi sinh viên tham gia vào các bài học nói tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, mặc dù cảm thấy khó khăn khi tham gia vào các hoạt động thảo luận nhưng sinh viên vẫn muốn giảng viên trao cho họ nhiều cơ hội tham gia vào các hoạt động giao tiếp bằng tiếng Anh. Kết quả của nghiên cứu này được sử dụng làm tài liệu tham khảo hữu ích cho những người có liên quan.

1. Introduction

Self-assessment activities help students develop reflective practice and self-monitoring skills. By evaluating their own work and progress, freshmen can gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to make more informed decisions about their learning strategies. Engaging in self-assessment activities can enhance metacognition, which involves understanding one's own thinking processes and learning strategies. By reflecting on their work and progress, freshmen can develop a deeper

understanding of their abilities and learning processes, leading to improved learning outcomes. When freshmen actively participate in assessing their own learning progress, they take ownership of their education. This sense of ownership can increase motivation and engagement, as students feel a greater sense of responsibility for their own learning (Bakar, N. I. A., Noordin, N., & Razali, A. B, 2019). Self-assessment activities can help freshmen develop a range of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed learning. These skills are valuable not only in academic settings but also in future

professional endeavors. Implementing self-assessment can potentially reduce the teacher's assessment workload, especially when combined with peer assessment. By involving students in the assessment process, teachers can distribute the workload and focus on providing targeted feedback and guidance. Self-assessment activities help students become realistic judges of their own performance (Brown, H. D, 2014) When evaluating their work against agreed-upon criteria, freshmen can develop a better understanding of their progress and areas for improvement. Self-assessment empowers freshmen to take an active role in their education. It allows them to set goals, identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and make informed decisions about their learning journey. It is important to note that self-assessment should be introduced gradually, with clear instructions and support from instructors (Cronbach, L. J (1951). On integrating self-assessment into the overall assessment plan and providing guidance, freshmen can fully benefit from this process. In general, self-assessment can be a valuable tool for freshmen, promoting reflective practice, enhancing learning outcomes, and fostering the development of important skills for their academic and professional success.

In the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), the learners are taught four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of the four skills, speaking is considered as the most important and essential skill. It is classified as a productive skill that language is generated by learners in speech (Bakar, N. I. A., Noordin, N., & Razali, A. B, 2019). In addition, the fact shows that many college or university students possess weak ability to communicate in English language environments. They often lose self-confidence or have no ideas when having a conversation in English. According to Harmer Cronbach, L. J (1951), speaking activities provide the students with opportunities for rehearsal and motivate them. There exist different speaking activities, which are enjoyable such as information

gap, debates, layout problems, discussion, games, role play (Dornyei, Z., & Taguchi, T, 2010) If the teachers can set up speaking tasks properly and effectively, they can motivate their students a lot in learning speaking skills.

The fact has been indicated that the unsatisfactory state and conditions of teaching and learning English for non-English major students can be possibly due to their multilevel training objectives; that is, freshmen do not have the same level of English language proficiency, especially during the speaking periods their interaction is restricted. Only some able students get involved in the activities conducted by the teachers while others keep silent or do other things (Dushi, G, 2012). Overall, their speaking ability is low. Many students can hardly ever communicate in English because of low motivation and poor language performance. In class they are not able to express their thoughts and opinions satisfactorily (Ekmekçi. E, 2016; Gomari, H. & Marshall D. 2017).

Thus, oral mistakes and slips such as inadequate vocabulary, structures, poor pronunciation, stress and intonation often happen. Learners seem to speak slowly with a lot of hesitation and repetition (Dornyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). Therefore, choosing suitable methods to promote the student motivational participation in speaking periods is very important to the teachers of English. Discussion is a teaching technique to improve verbal communication and critical thinking skills and discussion method enables first-year students to organize and express their ideas freely. Those ideas in their mind will motivate them to talk and link ideas with other fields of knowledge to create heated conversation in the classroom (Gomari, H. & Marshall D, 2017; Harmer. I, 2007). Accordingly, the author aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using discussion activities in English speaking classes, which is regarded to provide a significant contribution to the improvement of the Hanoi Law University (HUBT) freshmen in improving speaking ability and the quality of teaching speaking skills at HUBT (La, T. H , 2011;

Mengo, S, 2016). To find out the self-assessment of the freshmen's motivational participation in discussion activities of speaking lessons at HUBT, the following questions would be served as the corpus of the study as follows:

1. How do freshmen evaluate their proficient involvement in discussion activities during English speaking lessons?

2. What are first-year non-English major students' perspectives of the effectiveness of using discussion activities in English speaking lessons?

Theoretically, the outcomes of the study are intended to provide the researcher and English language teachers with the transparent demotivated factors affecting HUBT students' motivation in speaking skills and their speaking proficiency. Practically, the findings of the study could be beneficial for the English teachers at HUBT in particular and those in Vietnam in general to enhance their speaking lessons, which in turn, may contribute to improving the motivation of their students to speak and their English-speaking skills.

2. Methods and materials

2.1. Research design

The quantitative research was basically designed to conduct a cross sectional study of 69 representative non-major English first-year students, who were in the course No.27 (K27) at Hanoi University of Business and Technology. The researcher was, within the constraints of time and money, unable to collect information from all the population, so stratified sampling formula (Slovin's formula) was used to select a sample of 69 respondents. The questionnaire was floated among these participants in classrooms. Then the author used screening data process to check for the liability, then, the data were addressed by IBM SPSS v.25 application for the questionnaire.

2.2. Research instruments

This study employed the researcher-made questionnaire basing on the factual and behavioural

criteria recommended by Dörnyei and Taguchi (Nejad, A. M., & Mahfoodh, O. H. A, 2019). The first part investigated some demographic information of the respondents such as genders, residence, and the length of learning English. The second part used close-ended questions regarding their English motivational participation in discussion activities. The questionnaire was implemented a dry run for content validation and fine-tuned properly to retain the statements according to the range of confidence level ($\alpha = 0.76 - 0.95$, fairly high; Cronbach (Nguyen.T. H, 2012).

2.3. Participants

The participants were selected from K27. In order to select the samples from the large population, the researcher selected two classes during the first term of the 2022-2023 academic year at HUBT. Particularly, the majority of participants were male students ($n = 42$; similar to 60.9%) while 27 female students accounted for 39.1%. Regarding their residence, the first rank the participants ($n = 29$; equivalent to 42%) lived came from rural areas, the successive rank was 26 participants or 37.7%, who were from urban areas, and the lower proportion of respondents (14 students, same as 20.3%) lived in mountainous areas. For the duration of the respondents' English learning, the data revealed that they had been learning English for less than 15 years ($n = 47$; accounting for 68.1%), and 22 students, equivalent to 31.9%, had spent less than 10 years studying English.

2.4. Data analysis

The data was collected, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. Specially, frequency count and percentage were used to treat the profile of the respondents. Descriptive statistics was employed to address Likert-scale statement to find out the means and standard deviations relevant to the interval scales such as uninterested (1.0 – 1.75), not really interested

(1.76 – 2.50), interested (2.51 – 3.25), and highly interested (3.26 – 4.0).

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the student intrinsic motivation in participating in discussion activities of speaking lessons. As glimpsed from Table 1, it clearly illustrates the low level of student intrinsic motivational participation in discussion activities. Actually, discussion is the activity in which people talk about something and tell each other

their ideas or opinions, this can be understood that discussion is an activity in which people talk together in order to share information about a topic or problem or to seek a solution. Concerning English language teaching, discussion is potential to be implemented because it is expected to enable students to promote their speaking ability and to provide greater interaction between teachers and students. The previous studies [i.e., 2; 11; 12] share the same findings as this study.

Table 1. Student Motivational Participation in Discussion Activities of Speaking Lessons

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
Your level of interest in learning speaking lessons?	69	2.12	.758	Low
How do you feel when taking part in discussion activities?	69	2.97	.857	Neutral
Valid N (listwise)	69			

When asking the participants whether they like any of the two discussion activities - i.e., layout problems and debates - which have been applied by the teacher, most students (n = 38; same as 55.1%) prefer “layout problems” to “debates” (31 students, making up 44.9%). Layout problems are activities for matured, advanced students that require some preliminary reading. The basic method is used for evaluation and comparison task, except this time participants are only able to select one object for a particular reason.

Many different language functions may be needed and the number of different structures needed is correspondingly large. On the other hand, debate is an adversarial activity, it provides numerous positive benefits for students. Debate increases opportunities for speaking and listening in the classroom. During a debate, students take turns speaking in response to the arguments made by their opponents. At the same time, other students participating in the debate, or in the audience, must listen carefully for arguments made or evidence used in supporting a position. The standard class debate has some disadvantages and drawbacks as a vehicle for fluency practice,

including its restricted selection of subjects and low attendance. Many students, especially the more mature and intelligent, enjoy this form of debate because oratory and dialectic skills are thought to improve their creative, critical and reasoning skills.

Table 2 indicates the participants’ viewpoints on the practice of discussion groups. On the whole, they do not express high remarks on the discussion activities. Obviously, students’ motivation needs to be encouraged by teachers in learning process. This study focuses on speaking skills in English teaching and learning, the researcher believes that the degree of motivation is directly proportional to the level of students’ involvement in speaking activities. The more motivated the students are, the more actively they will participate in oral activities. Therefore, in order to make students motivated in EFL contexts, teachers should include many activities and strategies that attract students’ attention and make them interested in the lessons, and then their learning process will be more productive. The findings in the study of Mengo [10] are somehow in line with this study.

Table 2. Student perspectives towards the implementation of discussion activities

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Discussion activities make me feel relaxed and enjoyable.	69	2.25	.530	Disagreement
Discussion activities help lower my anxiety and develop confidence.	69	1.58	.783	Strong disagreement
Discussion activities give me more opportunities to speak English.	69	3.07	.705	Neutrally
Discussion activities make the speaking lessons more interesting because I can get involved in the tasks, and work out the solutions to the problems with my friends.	69	3.26	.816	Neutrally
Discussion activities help me a lot in improving my speaking motivation.	69	2.43	.846	Disagreement

To examine if the participants want their teachers to use discussion activities in their English-speaking classes in the future, the results reveal that although discussion activities are challenging, the majority of the participants ($n = 44$; equal to 63.8%) want to use these activities in the classrooms, whereas approximately one-third of the respondents ($n = 25$; same as 36.2%) do not want their teachers to conduct discussion activities in their lessons. Certain factors, such as intelligence, aptitude, personality, preferences, and acquisition age, can influence learners' motivation. Intelligence is linked to how well students perform on certain types of tests. Aptitude involves the ability to identify and memorize new sounds, to understand the function of particular words in sentences and to figure out grammatical rules from language samples. Personality is the next factor to consider, which includes traits like extroversion, inhibition, self-esteem, empathy, dominance, and responsiveness. Another thing that affects learners' motivation is their preferences in acquiring new knowledge. Last but not least, learners' motivation is influenced by their age of acquisition.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire, it is concluded that first-year non-English major students do not feel confident and active in taking part in discussion

activities. The study's results also show that using discussion activities in speaking lessons make the class become more demotivated because their English competence is not very good so they are usually scared of making mistakes and losing their faces. Thus, HUBT freshmen do not think that the practice of using discussion activities is efficient and beneficial. To encourage students to actively participate in discussion and debate activities during English classes, it is necessary for lecturers to raise students' awareness of the advantages of group activities. Lecturers should help students clearly realize the necessity of being a fluent speaker of English, especially speaking skills, for their future work in order to activate each student's internal motivation. This motivation comes from the student's desire to possess and cultivate knowledge, passion along with willingness to participate in English speaking activities. Besides, lecturers also create a positive group work atmosphere so that students feel comfortable to share their own opinions in pairs or groups. A relaxing mood in an academic environment will create excitement for students, promote them to have a passion for becoming good speakers of English. Lecturers, however, have to note that when assigning students' pairs and groups, they must know their students well to appointing them in pairs and groups flexibly. Appropriate group division will create a good environment for

students to feel contented, confident and able to help each other. When students are at ease, they will enthusiastically participate in assigned tasks, promote their own initiatives to improve their English-speaking skills. In addition, lecturers need to be flexible when organizing group activities to suit each task and the capacity of each group or pair. To avoid losing the ability to control the class due to too much noise, teachers must clearly articulate the objectives, set the starting time, the ending time and the level of the participation of all members when assigning tasks. While students are working in groups, teachers are expected to move around to observe and encourage their interaction, remind group members to share ideas in English, and assist them how to speak as the native speakers of English. With pair or group work, students have a chance to showing how competent they are in expressing their English abilities./.

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