

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO  
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**

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**KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP**

**NGÀNH: TIẾNG ANH**

**Sinh viên : Ngô Văn Tú**

**Giảng viên hướng dẫn : Th.s Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Chi**

**HẢI PHÒNG - 2018**

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO  
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**

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**DIFFICULTIES FACING FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS  
IN ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL AT HAIPHONG PRIVATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY  
NGÀNH: TIẾNG ANH**

**Sinh viên : Ngô Văn Tú**

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**NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP**

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*Tên đề tài: Difficulties facing first-year English majors in English speaking skill at Haiphong Private University*

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1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp (về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

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2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

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3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

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*Nội dung hướng dẫn: Difficulties facing first-year English majors in English speaking skill at Haiphong Private University*

### Người hướng dẫn thứ hai:

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*Sinh viên*

*Người hướng dẫn*

*Hải Phòng, ngày ..... tháng.....năm 2018*

**Hiệu trưởng**

**GS.TS.NGƯT Trần Hữu Nghị**

## PHẦN NHẬN XÉT CỦA CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN

**1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp:**

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*Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm*

**Cán bộ hướng dẫn**

*(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)*

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# ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is one of the most necessary skills to communicate in the real life. In learning a foreign language, it is more and more important to learn this skill. This study aims to enhance the oral communication skills (conversations) of HPU (Hải Phòng Private University) first-year English majors. The sample of the study consists of 25 students (20 female students and 5 male students from NA2101); all of them are juniors students at English department (ED) at HPU. I have used random sample method. To achieve the objectives of the present study, I have used semi structured interview as an instrument for data collection. Regarding the difficulties in speaking English, this study has revealed four difficulties: difficulty in pronouncing English words, lack of lexical resources, lack of self-confidence, and confusion of grammar use. Second, the factors that have affected the difficulties in speaking English are lack of knowledge and practice, the audience attention, English speaking environment...



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# **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

## **1. Rationale of the study.**

Speaking English is considered as an important language skill and fundamental to human communication. Many people around the world use English to communicate each other. Being able to speak English, people can interact with others without obstacles. In addition, people speak English to upgrade themselves to survive in the globalization era.

As a researcher, I would like to present the thesis title “A study on difficulties facing first-year English majors in English speaking skill at HPU” for several reasons.

First of all, speaking is the most important skill in communication in the real life. They are closely interdependent. We are able to talk sensibly when we understand what is said to us. If we fail to understand spoken language, we may miss important information and respond in a funny way. Moreover, in learning a language, speaking is a useful means of providing students with comprehensible input, which is an essential component of the whole language learning process. And teaching speaking skill in classroom helps students make transition from classroom English to real-life English more easily and effectively. Therefore, I would like to do this research to help the students and teachers pay more attention to speaking skill.

Secondly, Vietnamese student, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> year English major students have a lot of difficulties in learning and practicing English speaking skill . They often fall into confusion when speaking English because lack of professional knowledge, confidence, and the good learning method as well. Beside, the learning passive environment from high school with the same and boring lessons without the interesting extra-activities prevent them from practicing and improving English. That is the main reason they don't get the effective result in learning speaking in university.

After studying at Foreign Language Department, HP Private University (HPU), for nearly four years, I realize that the first-year students of English major still have many difficulties in their speaking skill. In the hope of finding out the difficulties of speaking that they normally get, a study entitled: “A study on difficulties facing first-year English majors in English speaking skill at HPU” has been conducted because of all above mentioned reasons.

## **2. The aims of the study.**

The study is done with the following aims: Firstly, the study is carried out in order to survey the real state of teaching and learning English speaking skill in HPU so that I could work out the reasons for those difficulties. Secondly, most students find it difficult to learn speaking skill so I would like to find the common difficulties that the students face when they learn English speaking skill at HPU. Finally, because of the difficulties, many students are not interested in learning and practicing this skill at the class, therefore the study would like to suggest some possible solutions to those difficulties. They will be very helpful for the teachers to motivate their students in speaking classes. These suggestions also wish to help the students catch up with the speed of a normal conversation in the real life so that they can improve their communication competence.

## **3. Research questions**

1. What are the difficulties faced by the first year students“ of English Department of HPU in speaking English?
2. What are some solutions to improve their English speaking skill?

## **4. The scope of the study.**

The study is about difficulties in learning speaking skill for first-year students in English major in HPU. Because of the limitations of time and knowledge, the shortage of reference materials, this study cannot cover the whole issue of speaking skill. It only focuses on exploring common difficulties students get in speaking skill. Moreover, the study could not touch upon all the students at HPU; It is confined to the first-year students in English major in HPU only.

## **5. The method of the study.**

This study used qualitative as research method. It is to help the researcher to reach his aims for the study, which is to reveal the difficulties in speaking English among the first year students of English Department. “If the research objective is exploring the Phenomenon under study, then it is recommended to use qualitative methods”. I believe that this study will obtain deeper and more detailed understandings about a phenomenon, which are the difficulties in speaking English and the problems cause difficulties in

speaking among first year students. Therefore, using qualitative is appropriate for this study.

After getting the results, the researcher will use the tables and charts for presenting the collection data.

## **6. The organization of the study.**

The study includes three main parts, as follows:

### ***Part 1: Introduction***

- Rationale of the study.
- Aims of the study.
- Research of the study.
- Scope of the study.
- Methods of the study.
- Organization of the study.

### ***Part 2: Development***

- Theoretical background
- Methodology
- Findings and Discussion

### ***Part 3: Conclusion***

- Summaries the study.
- The limitations of the study.
- Suggestions for further studies.

# **PART II: DEVELOPMENT**

## **CHAPTER 1. Theoretical Background**

### ***1.1 Overview of speaking***

#### ***1.1.1 Definition of speaking***

There are a lot of definitions of the word “speaking” that have been suggested by the researchers in language learning. In Webster New World Dictionary, speaking is to say words orally, to communicate as by talking, to make a request, and to make a speech (Nunan, 1995).

According to Chaney (1998), speaking is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. Brown (1994) and Burns and Joyce (1997) defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information.

Bygate (1987) defined speaking as the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. It is regarded as combining sounds systematically to form meaningful sentences. Eckard and Kearny (1981), Florez (1999), Howarth (2001), and Abd El Fattah Torky (2006) defined speaking as a two-way process including a true communication of opinions, information, or emotions. This top-down view regards the spoken texts as the collaboration between two or more people in the shared time and the shared context.

To sum up, all of definitions are given with a view to clarifying the nature of the speaking skill which is necessary in the process of acquiring a native language or a foreign one.

#### ***1.1.2 Types of speaking***

According to the study of the Indian linguist Miss. Truptishinde:

There are 3 kinds of speaking situations in which we find ourselves:

- Interactive
- Partially interactive
- Non-interactive

- Interactive speaking situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately speaking and listening, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner.
- Some speaking situations are partially interactive, such as when giving a speech to a live audience, where the convention is that the audience does not interrupt the speech. The speaker nevertheless can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and bodies language whether or not he or she is being understood.
- Few speaking situations may be totally non-interactive, such as when recording a speech for a radio broadcast.

### ***1.1.3 The importance of speaking skill***

Humans are programmed to speak before they learn to read and write. In any given circumstances, human beings spend much more time interacting orally with language rather than using it in its written form. Speaking is the most important skill because it is one of the abilities that are needed to perform a conversation. English speaking is not an easy task because speakers should know many significant components like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Learners should have enough English speaking ability in order to communicate easily and effectively with other people. Rivers (1981) studied the use of language outside the classroom situation and understood that speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing combined. According to Brown (1994), speaking and listening are learners' language tools.

Efrizal (2012) Pourhosein Gilakjani (2016) expressed that speaking is of great significance for the people interaction where they speak everywhere and every day. Speaking is the way of communicating ideas and messages orally. If we want to encourage students to communicate in English, we should use the language in real communication and ask them to do the same process.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that in the traditional methods, the speaking skill was ignored in the classrooms where the emphasis was on reading and writing skills. For example, in The Grammar-Translation method, reading and writing were the important skills and speaking and

listening skills were not of great significance. According to Ur (2000), of all the four language skills called speaking, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking is the most important one that is very necessary for the effective communication.

The significance of speaking is indicated with the integration of the other language skills. Speaking helps learners develop their vocabulary and grammar skills and then better their writing skill. Students can express their emotions, ideas; say stories; request; talk, discuss, and show the various functions of language. Speaking is of vital importance outside the classroom. Therefore, language speakers have more opportunities to find jobs in different organizations and companies. These statements have been supported by Baker and Westrup (2003) who said that learners who speak English very well can have greater chance for better education, finding good jobs, and getting promotion.

Previous researches approve that persons cannot learn a language without many opportunities for meaningful repetition. Oral language interactions and the opportunity to produce the language in meaningful tasks provide the practice that is very important to internalizing the language. Asher (2003) supports the idea that very soon after teachers model the language, learners like to imitate what have been said. Krashen (1988) examined the relation between speaking and listening skills. He stated that when students speak, their speaking provides evidence that they have acquired the language. This idea led some teachers to jump quickly from speaking teaching to reading and writing teaching.

## ***1.2. Difficulties in learning the speaking skill.***

### ***1.2.1. Difficulties in speaking English among the first-year students of English department of HP Private University***

After conducting interviews to the participants, I found that they have faced similar difficulties in speaking English in terms of pronouncing English words and vocabulary mastery. These following findings below are the difficulties in speaking by first year students at the ED of HPU.

Difficulties in pronouncing English words: The first finding has had difficulties in pronouncing English words. The participants got difficulties in pronouncing English words during speaking English activities. The



problem which is often faced by the students in speaking is about pronunciation. They felt difficult to pronounce certain words. In English, pronunciation and spelling are different. For example, "o" sometimes could be pronounced "a" like in "on" and "a" just like in "our". Therefore, the students did not easily recognize the pronunciation.

Lack of vocabulary mastery. All of the participants that the researcher interviewed was lack of vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary is an essential part of speaking. Due to lack of vocabulary, students cannot express their ideas in sentences. It was proven by the statements of the participants. Lack of vocabulary is one of the difficulties faced by all participants. Based on Shahzadi, et al. (2014), the students could not also express themselves well or adequately because they lack adequate and appropriate vocabulary. Although the students had slightly different experiences in speaking, they told that lack made them being scary.

Low self-confidence. One of the difficulties commonly faced by students was having low self-confidence. It proved that lack of confidence became one of the difficulties in speaking. Low self-confidence was a crucial factor that affected students' difficulties because confidence could support students to reach their goals (Gruber, 2010). This also supported by Shahzadi, et al. (2014), the students feel fearful to speak English in front of other people because they lack of confidence. Fear and worry are a part feeling that are similar. Being fearful refers to "frightened or worried about something".

Difficulties in grammar use: This difficulty was faced by almost participants. Both participants had difficulties in grammar use especially in direct or spontaneous time. Participant one stated "for example, when I forgot one of my speeches, I replaced with my own words that are not in line with the grammar. It was added by participant one who stated "practically, I did not know whether my grammar was wrong or right". Moreover, it was followed by participant two who asserted that "speaking is spontaneous, and it makes me confused (in using grammar)". It was in line with Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) who stated that there are some of the common grammar problems faced by English language learners such as the misuse of preposition, articles, past tense, and the third person singular.

Based on the difficulties in grammar use, both participants faced the same problem in use grammar, but the case they faced was different.

### ***1.2.2. Factors affecting students' difficulties in speaking English***

Learners' speaking performance are influenced by factors like performance conditions, affective factors, speaking skill, and feedback during speaking tasks (Tuan & Mai, 2015).

The first factor is pertinent to performance conditions. Learners carry out a speaking activity under different conditions. Performance conditions impact speaking performance and these conditions involve time pressure, planning, the quality of performance, and the amount of support (Nation & Newton, 2009).

The second factor is related to affective ones. Oxford (1990) said that one of the important factors in learning a language is the affective side of students. According to Krashen (1982), a lot of affective variables have been connected to second language acquisition and motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety were the three main types that have been investigated by many researchers.

Speaking ability is the third factor. Doff (1998) says that learners cannot improve their speaking ability unless they develop speaking ability. Learners should comprehend what is uttered to them in order to have a successful dialogue. Shumin (1997) represented that when students talk, the other students answer through the speaking process. Speakers have the role of both listeners and speakers. It can be concluded that students are not able to reply if they cannot comprehend what is told. That is to say, speaking is very closely related to speaking.

Topical knowledge is the fourth factor. Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined it as the knowledge structures in longterm memory. That is, topical knowledge is the speakers' knowledge of related topical information. It enables students to apply language with respect to the world in which they live. Bachman and Palmer (1996) assert that topical knowledge has a great impact on the learners' speaking performance.

The sixth factor is related to the feedback during speaking activities. A lot of learners expect their teachers to give them the necessary feedback on their speaking performance. According to Harmer (1991), the decisions that instructors adopt towards their learners' performance depend on the stages of the lesson, the tasks, and the kinds of mistakes they make. Harmer (1991) also

continued that if instructors directly correct their students' problems, the flow of the dialogue and the aim of the speaking task will be spoiled. Baker and Westrup (2003) supported the above statement and said that if learners are always corrected, they will be demotivated and afraid of talking. It has been suggested that instructors should always correct their learners' mistakes positively and give them more support and persuasion while speaking.

According to Mahripah (2014), learners' speaking skill is affected by some linguistic components of language like phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and psychological factors such as motivation and personality. Phonology is a difficult aspect of language learning for learners. As we know, English is not a phonetic language. That is, pronunciation of English words are not similar to their spellings. Words with similar spellings are sometimes pronounced differently because of their surrounding contexts like tenses and phonemes that come after them. This can cause a lot of problems for non-native speakers of English and they sometimes get confused in producing the English words.

Learners should have the knowledge of words and sentences. They should comprehend how words are divided into different sounds and how sentences are stressed in specific ways. Grammatical competence can help speakers apply and perceive the structure of English language correctly that leads to their fluency (Latha, 2012). Native speakers say what they want without having any problems because they are familiar with the language. If they have problems in expressing some concepts, they try to use other ways of telling those things. They may make certain mistakes syntactically but these mistakes do not change the meaning of the sentences they want to express and this doesn't create serious problems for the listeners to comprehend them. But the mistakes non-native speakers commit are those that change the meaning of utterances they want to convey and can create some problems for their understanding (Mahripah, 2014).

Motivation can influence and be influenced by the components of language learning. According to Merisuo-Storm (2007), an integrative and friendly view towards the people whose language is being learned makes sensitise learners to the audio-lingual aspects of language and making them more sensitive to pronunciation and accent of language. If learners have an unfriendly attitude towards the language, they will not have any substantial improvement in

acquiring the different features of language. The above sentences support the view that just communicative competence is not sufficient for learners to improve their speaking skill. Without positive attitudes towards the speaking performance, the aim of speaking will not be obtainable for learners.

The fear of speaking English is pertinent to some personality constructs like anxiety, inhibition, and risk taking. Speaking a language sometimes results in anxiety. Sometimes, extreme anxiety may lead to despondence and a sense of failure in learners (Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar 2011). According to Woodrow (2006), anxiety has a negative effect on the oral performance of English speakers. Adults are very careful to making errors in whatever they tell. In their opinion, errors show a kind of unawareness which can hinder them to speak English in front of other people. Speaking anxiety may originate from a classroom condition with the different abilities of language learners. Learners are divided into two groups: strong and weak ones. The strong learners often dominate the slow and weak ones. The weak learners do not usually want to talk in front of the strong ones which lead to their silence during the whole class activity.

Inhibition is a feeling of worry that stops people from telling or performing what they want (Cambridge A. L. Dictionary, 2008). All human beings make a series of defenses to protect the ego. Due to the fact that committing mistakes is a natural process of learning a language, it certainly causes potential threats to one's ego. These threats disappoint the learners to talk English and prefer to be silent rather than being criticized in front of a large number of people (Brown, 2000). Risk-taking is pertinent to inhibition and self-respect. Learners who have a low self-respect tend to stop taking a risk of committing mistakes in their speaking tasks which resulting in the inhibition to the betterment of their speaking skill (Mahripah, 2014).

## CHAPTER 2: Methodology

### *2.1. Population and sample*

The research was undertaken with the participation of students in Faculty of Foreign Language. They age from 18. The subjects of the study were 25 first-year students in ED from K21 when they were in the first semester of their academic year at HPU. A large numbers of them have learnt English for 7 years (4 years at secondary school and 3 years at high school). However, their English backgrounds are quite similar because most of them come from different rural areas in the North and under being influence of curriculum of English for high schools students in the past, students did not have many chances to practice English skills. Thus, when entering HPU, their English levels were limited and they have to face up with many difficulties in studying.

The questionnaires were designed both for students because the researcher finds them easy to summarize and analyze the collected data. Questionnaires for students consist of 14 questions which are specified in the three research questions. Therefore, the survey questionnaires for students were delivered to 25 first-year students of K21 at Faculty of Foreign Languages, HPU to find information for the three research questions. Among the 14 questions, the first part are designed for collecting general information of students, questions of part II aim at finding out the students' attitudes towards rewriting English sentences; questions from part III mainly seek for the current techniques of teaching and learning in speaking English sentences for first- year students of K21 at Faculty of Foreign Languages, HPU.

To guarantee the reliability and the validity of the samples, the questionnaires for learners were directly distributed for learners of K21 during their break time in the class and collected right away. That meant these learners could pay most attention to answer the questions related to what they had just experienced. Before asking the learners to do the survey questionnaire, the researcher briefly stated the purpose and significance of the study and clarified any misunderstanding about the survey questions. Beside the written instructions on the handout, oral the instructions and explanations in Vietnamese were presented to avoid any ambiguity. In the end, there were 25 students participating in giving responses to the survey questionnaire.

## ***2.2. Research methods***

An interview is carried out with 3 students in 1 classes of K21 in Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) at Hai Phong Private University. All of them agree to help the researcher helpfully and comfortably. This aim to collect students' ideas about the factors affecting the English speaking skill and suggestions to improve it.

After the interview, the researcher based on the interview results to analyze the data. The interview results will be recorded carefully. The interview data analysis will be presented with the collected data from the questionnaire in each part.

The data collection in the study is derived from students who are in the major at Faculty of Foreign Languages. To collect information about the issues of learning English speaking skill of first year English major students at HPU, first of all, 25 copies of survey questionnaires were handed out to students and 4 copies of survey questionnaires were sent to the lecturers in FFL. In addition, three other students were also invited for the interview.

When the data collection was accomplished, the data analysis was initiated. The results of survey questionnaires revealed students' techniques they use in speaking skill.

Almost 30 copies of the questionnaire delivered to the learners. The data are analyzed in this part of the study in the below tables and charts which show the responses for the questions in the questionnaires. Besides, the first question the questionnaires bring a result that according to students' opinion, speaking skill is very difficult.

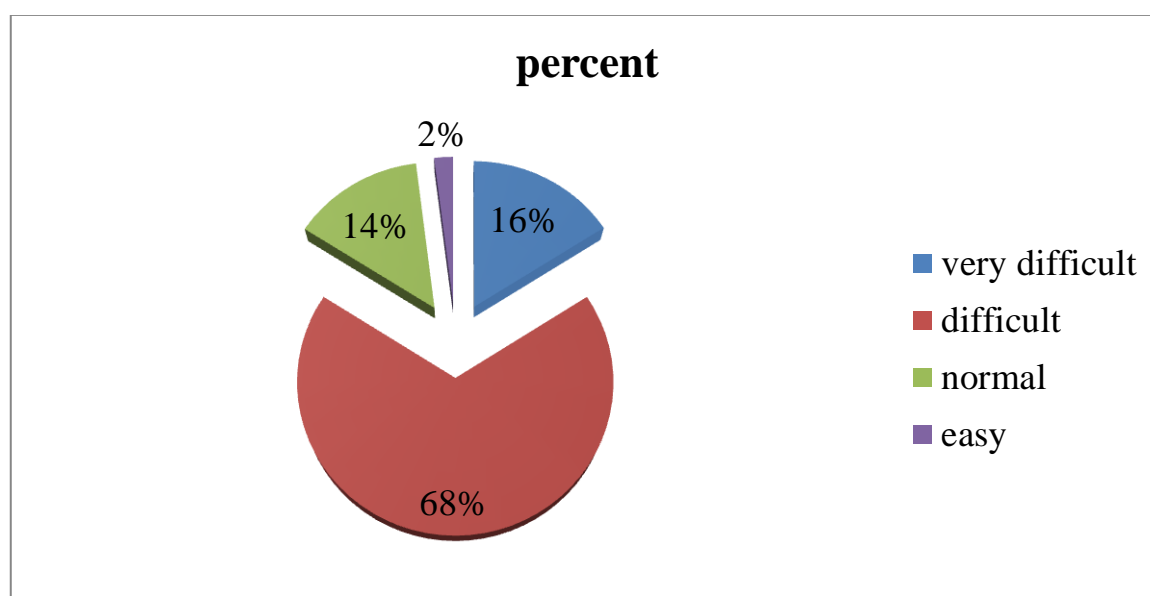
## CHAPTER 3: Findings and discussion

To complete this part of the study, the researcher analyzed the data based on questionnaires and then made conclusions. The figures are given through charts.

### *3.1: Difficulties in speaking English of first-year English majors in speaking classes at HPU*

The answer was found after the researcher analyzed the results of the following 8 charts:

**Chart 1: The students' assessment of learning the speaking skill**



It can be seen obviously in the chart that the speaking skill is a difficult skill to learn. 68% of the learners suppose that speaking is difficult. For the students, learning from English and learning this skill is really a problem. Moreover, the number of learners who agree that learning the speaking skill is very difficult took 16%. It is the same as the number of the learners who find learning speaking normal (14%) or easy (2%). In fact, as what can be seen by the observation, the learners who confirm that it is easy to learn the speaking skill are the best students. In short, the survey proves the assumption about the difficulty of learning from English and learning it.

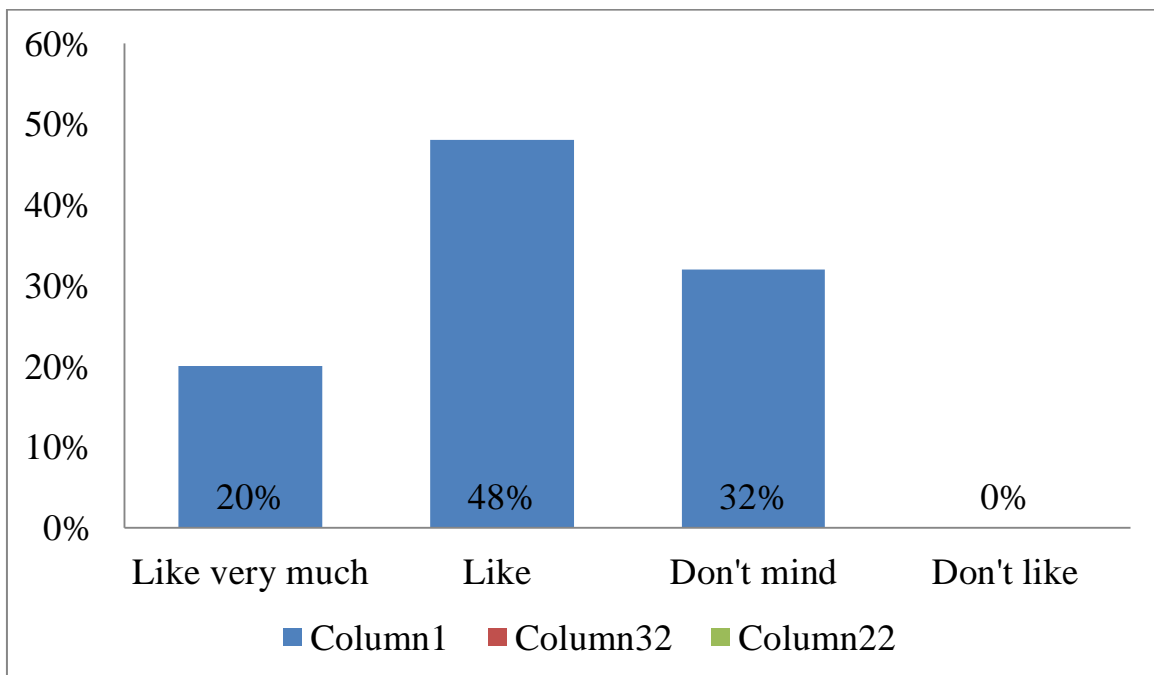
*Below is the result when the author asks three students the same question in the interview.*

Table: The interview results of students' assessment in English speaking skill

<b>Question 1: what do you think of difficulty of English speaking skill?</b>	<b>Numbers (%)</b>
A. Very difficult	2 (67%)
B. Difficult	1 (33%)
C. Normal	0 (0%)
D. Easy	0 (0%)

Statistics provided in Table 1 show that the interview result of students' assessment in English speaking skill, two students think that the rewriting English sentences is very difficult, and only 1 students (33%) say that rewriting English sentences is difficult. Almost students think that the rewriting English sentence is a challenging subject to them.

**Chart 2: The students' interest in learning speaking skill**



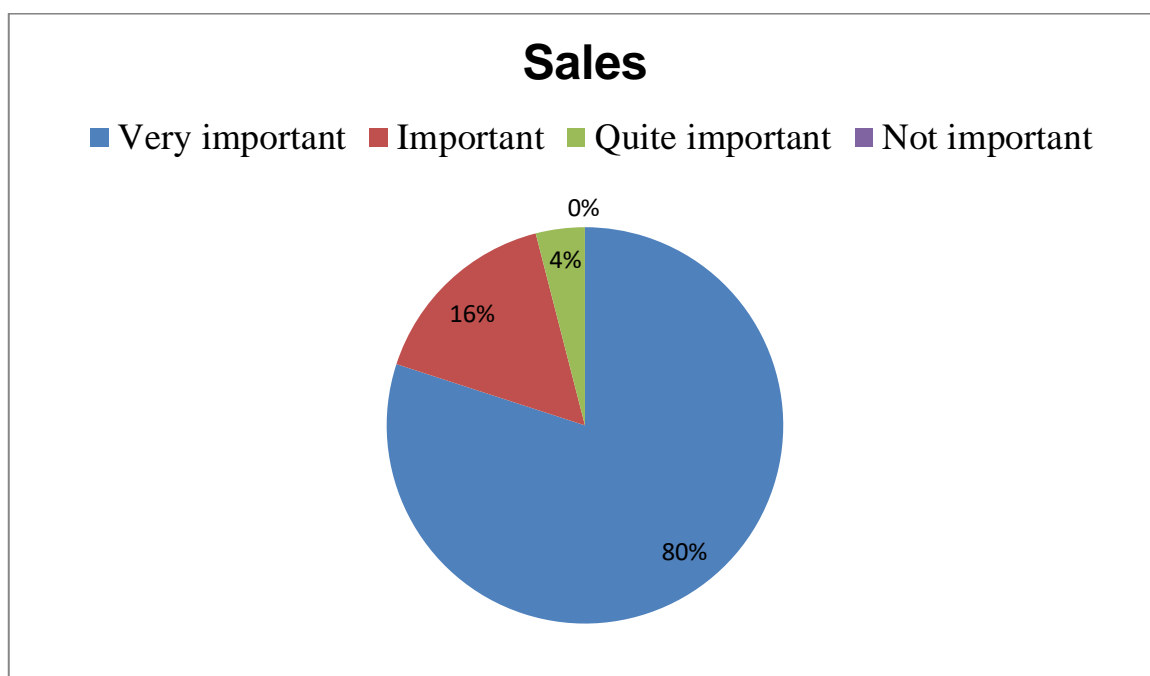
The column chart shows a surprising result which is very contrary to the author's subjective assumption. Normally, the difficulties bore the listeners. However, the survey indicates the contrast. In spite of the difficulties of learning



the speaking skill, 20% of the learners still like this skill very much and 48% of them like it. Speaking is not as boring as many people thought. As it can be seen, in the English class, learning speaking is interesting. No one dislikes it. About 32% of the learners do not mind learning this skill. For them, learning speaking might be neither interesting nor boring or it depends on each lesson. In conclusion, speaking English is a favorite subject of the students and it is difficult for students and very difficult for teachers.

To research more clearly the opinion students at Faculty of Foreign Languages, HPU, the second question in the questionnaire is designed to find out their assessment on the importance of speaking.

**Chart 3: Students' attitudes towards the importance of English speaking skill**

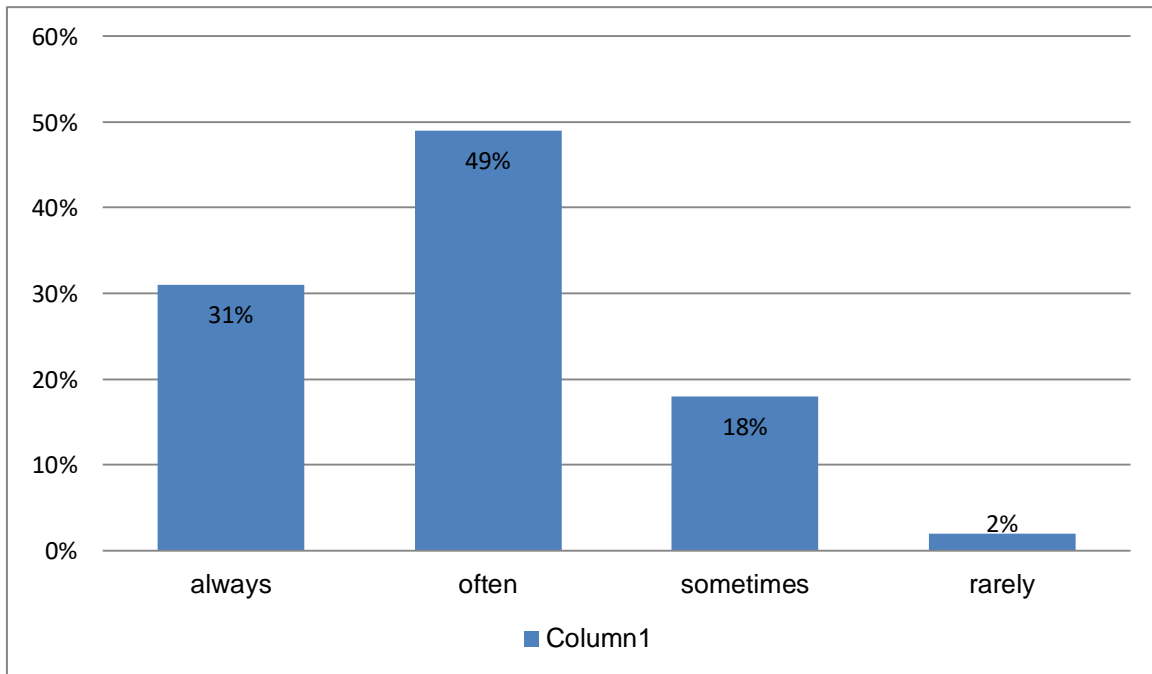


It can be seen clearly from the table 2, most of the students agree that learning speaking skill is very important as well as very important is 80%. Meanwhile, there are only 4% of them reckoning that it is quite important. This chart shows that most of students at Faculty of Foreign Languages, HPU claim that English speaking skill has an important role in learning English with a lot of fields in life.

In conclusion, speaking skill is one of the most necessary skills to communicate in the real life. In learning a foreign language, it is more and more important to learn this skill.

To have more details about the students' real situation in learning English speaking skill, the fourth question of the questionnaire is designed. The result is shown on the chart below.

**Chart 4: The frequency of students having problems in learning English speaking skill**

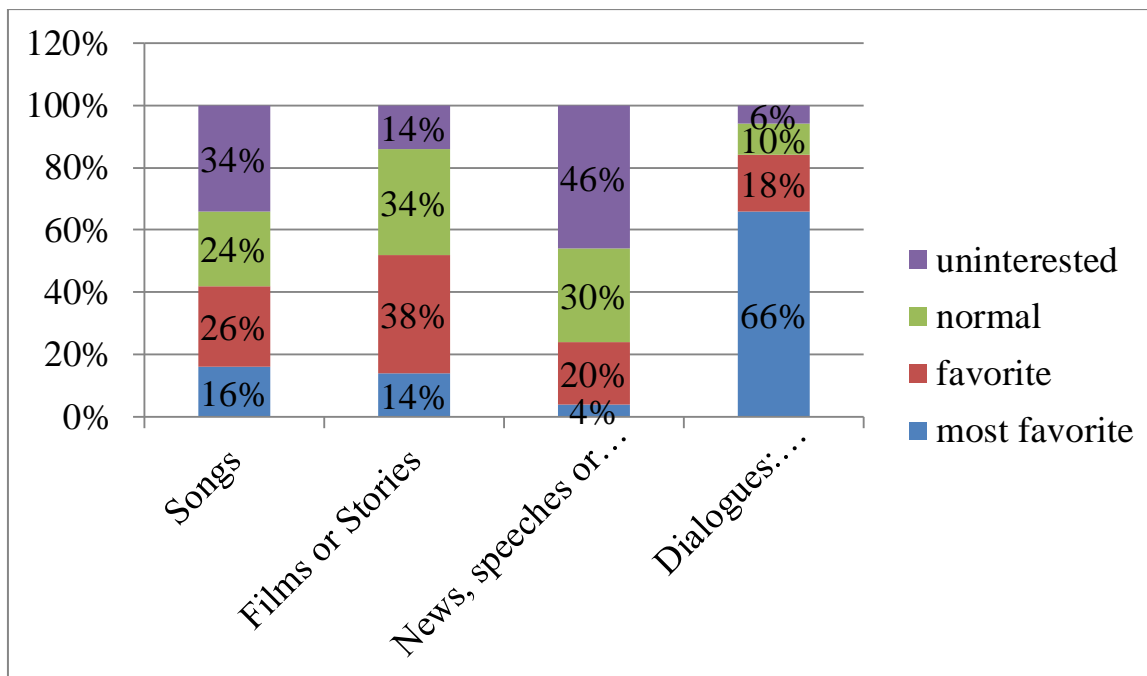


Statistics provided in Chart 3 shows the frequency of students' having problem when learning speaking skill. According to the collected data, 49% students who are very often and 31% of them always has trouble when speaking; in addition, 18% sometimes makes this and just 2% rarely.

To sum up, students always have problems in speaking English and this is a thing that students need repairing.

The question 5 of questionnaire for students mentioned to the kinds of speaking text which students expect to practice more. The collected data has shown in the below chart:

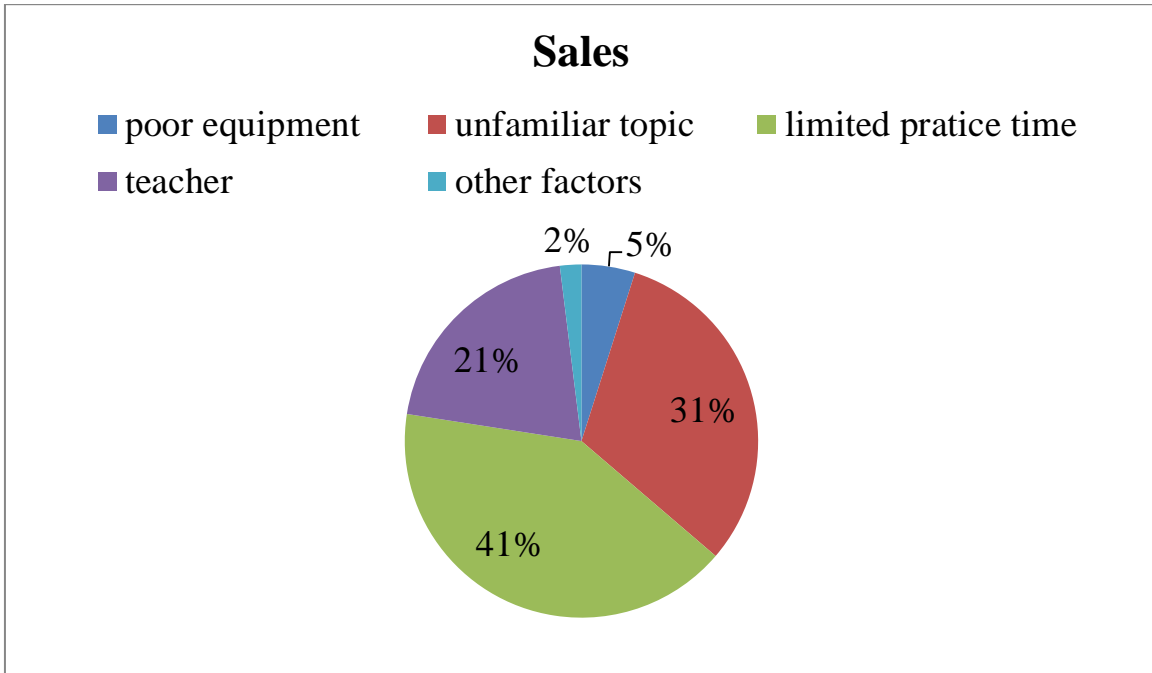
***Chart 5: Students' interest in extra speaking activities***



As it can be seen from the above bar chart, most of the students liked learning from the dialogues. Learning from the dialogues are the most favorite activities of 66% of the students. Only 6% of them are not interested in this kind. In contrast to the dialogues, learning from the news, speeches or lectures bored the most students (46%). As a consequence, 4% of them finds interested in these kinds of monologue. Besides, learning from the songs seems interesting. But, it is surprising when only 16% of the learners love them. Moreover, one third of them (34%) are not excited about the songs. Watching films or learning from the stories is accepted because 38% of them suppose those are their favorite activities and 14% affirm those are their most favorite activities. Additionally, 34% of them think those activities normal. In conclusion, most of the students like learning from the dialogues, conversations and interviews.

To find the techniques to improve speaking skill for first-year English major students at HPU, the author wants to find out the reasons which make you difficult to learn English speaking. The sixth question in the questionnaires is designed for researching this thing. Below is the chart of the difficulties in students' speaking.

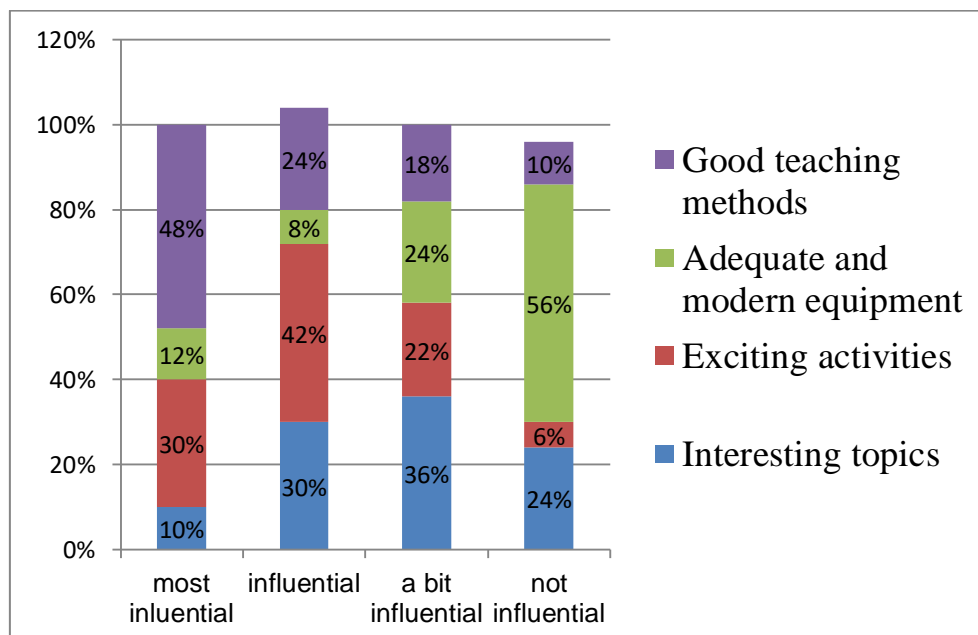
**Chart 6: Difficulties in students' speaking**



The chart shows that the poor equipment is not a big problem. Only 5% of the learners think it made them difficult to listen. There are 8 of the 25 students (32%) chose the factor unfamiliar topic. The most number of the students (41%) find that the main reason for the difficulties in speaking is the limited time of practicing at class. Besides, 21% of learners think that the teacher gives speed too fast. Except those factors, 2% of the learners also point some other factors affecting their speaking are their background knowledge, pronunciation practice.

To find out the factors have influence on the interested in English speaking skill, the 7<sup>th</sup> question of questionnaire is mention about it. The researcher gives 4 factors that influence in this skill, students.

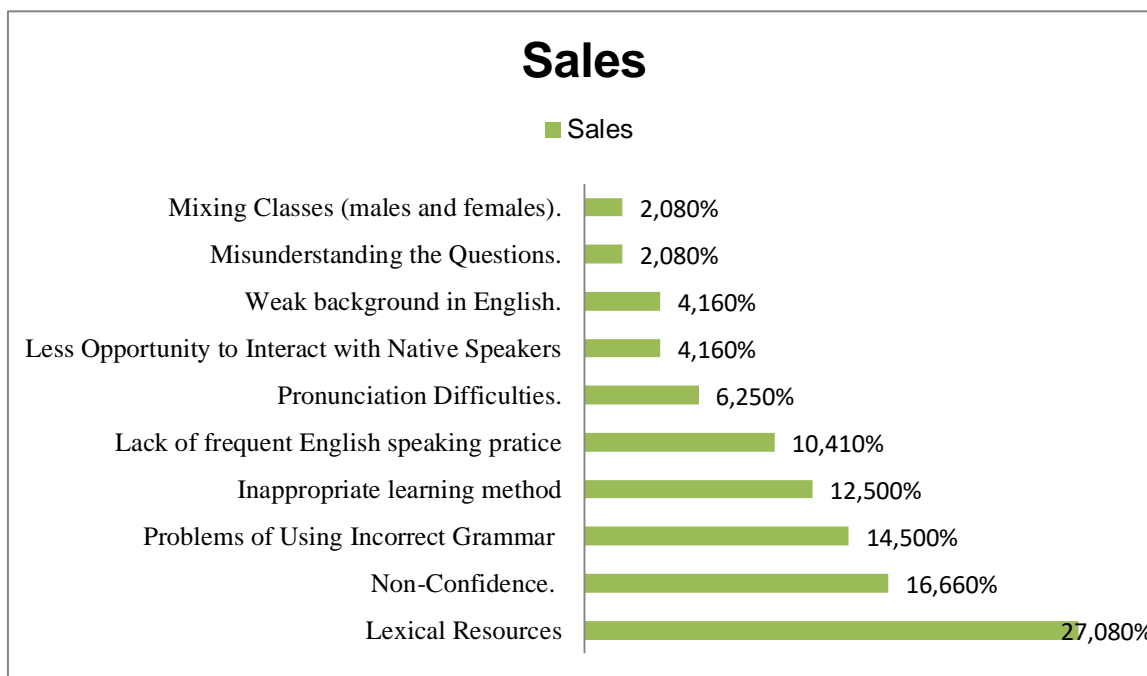
**Chart 7: Factors motivating students' learning the speaking skill**



It is easy to see from the above chart that the most influential factor to the students' motivation is the good teaching methods. 48% of the students affirm that. 24% of them think they are influential. So teaching method is the first element that all the teachers should notice in teaching any skills, not only for the speaking skill. The next factor that many students find interested is the speaking activities. 30% of the learners define the exciting activities motivate them a lot to learn better. Furthermore, 42% supposes that they are influential. A small number (6%) of the students think activities do not effect. In the meanwhile, 10% of the students rank the interesting speaking topics the most influential factor, and 26% agrees they are influential. However, 32% insist that topics had a bit influence. Also, 28% says the topics have no effects their speaking. The least influential factor of four is the equipment. Adequate and modern equipment are assessed that it does not have any effect on the learners' learning the speaking skill by 56% of the learners. It is an amazing number due to the need of the equipment.

This part shows the difficulties and problems that students are suffering through English oral communications inside the classroom

**Chart 8: Difficulties in speaking English of first-year English majors in speaking classes at HPU**



**- Lexical resources**

This problem has occupied top of the results according students' answers. Students have difficulties in memorizing vocabularies and English terms. On the other hands, most of the students also have problems in applying derivation rules. 13 out of 20 students (27.08%), mentions that they have suffered of limited amount of vocabulary inside the classroom. An evidence of that is as follows: Student number one said, " When I try to make a conversation with another, problem of a limited vocabulary faces me".

**- Confusion, worry, embarrassment, shyness and non-confidence.**

This difficulty presented results less than the first one, as these problems led the students to unsatisfied performance through the oral communication. 8 out of 20 participants (16.66%), mentions that they have suffered of confusion, worry, embarrassment, shyness and non-confidence inside the classroom. An evidence of that is as follows: One student said, "Sometimes, I feel confused, because I feel afraid of using wrong words".

***- Problems of using incorrect grammar***

Many students have erroneous usage of English grammar and incorrectly utilizing structures of sentence during the conversation, for example using verb forms doesn't match either the subjects or tense, or using the sentence missing verbs. 7 out of 20 students (14.58%), mentioned that they have suffered from problems of using incorrect grammar inside the classroom. An evidence of that is as follows: Student number four said, "I suffered from weakness of using English language rules".

***- Inappropriate learning method***

This point obviously was noticed among students. Many of the sample individuals don't give attention to their study and follow a correct way, hence, this neglect makes them unable to perform English speaking skills effectively inside the classroom, 6 out of 20 participants (12.50%), mentioned that they have suffered of limitation of following their study. An example of that is as follows: Student number thirteen said, "I do not follow my study, if I don't have examinations".

***- Lack of frequent English speaking practice.***

This factor showed results that same as the previous ones. Less frequent of students' practice short conversations among themselves and this leads them to be in low level of speaking skill, 5 participants out of 20 participants (14.41%), mentioned that they have suffered of limitation of the daily practice of conversation. An example of that is as follows: Student number eight said, "I have a weakness because I don't practice English daily".

***- Pronunciation difficulties.***

The results of pronunciation difficulties seemed to be less than all previously mentioned problems, 3 students out of 20 students (6.25%) mentioned that they have suffered of pronunciation problems. An evidence of that is as follows: Student number fifteen said, "I have a problem in pronunciation of some words".

***- Less opportunity to interact with English native speakers.***

This issue was different from others problem due to difficulties in meeting with native speakers, 2 out of 20 students (4.16%), mentioned that they face a problem with less interaction with native speakers. An evidence of that is as

follows: Student number five said, "I face weakness in speaking skill, because I don't have another English speaker to communicate with him".

**- *Misunderstanding the questions.***

This results of this matter showed that students were facing difficulties in their understanding the questions from the lecture, such trouble makes students confused and put them in the wrong track, and then their answers will be wrong, so their level of fluency in oral communication skills will be low. 1 out of 20 participants (2.08%) mentioned that he/she has a problem in misunderstanding the questions. an example of that as is follows: Participant number five said, "student did not understand the question in whole meaning".

**3.2. *Solution***

To know how the students have done to improve the difficulties they encounter in learning English speaking skills, the researchers came up with a few suggestions for student selection.

This part presented the solution for problems that students are suffering from English oral communications inside the classroom.

***Chart 9: How can HPU student overcome the weakness in speaking skill? (table)***

	Kinds of Overcomes the Weakness	Frequency	Percentage
1	Practice.	11	30.55%
2	Speaking to English, Songs, News, Films and, Conversations.	10	27.77%
3	Speaking with Native Speakers.	4	11.11%
4	Conversation among Students.	4	11.11%
5	Make the Short Drills at Home.	4	11.11%
6	Focusing on Pronunciation.	1	2.77%
7	Speaking English only inside the Classroom.	1	2.77%
8	Development of Grammar.	1	2.77%



The frequency of these ways ranges from 1 (development of grammar) to 11 (practice). The percentages were range from 2.77% to 30.55%, as follows:

**- *Practice***

The results showed that practice was the perfect approach that students must follow, to overcome their problems regarding speaking skill, this way took the top frequency, 11 students out of 20,(30.55%) mentioned that they have solutions through practice to overcome these problems. An evidence of that is as follow: Participant number eleven said, "When we practice more conversations, we will exceed this weakness.

**- *Listening to English, songs, news, films and, conversations.***

Speaking to English native speakers in a different ways is very essential for persons to strengthen correct pronunciation of words. 10 out of 20 participants (27.77%) mentioned that they have solutions through speaking to English, songs, news, films and, conversations. An example of that is as follows: Participant number two said, "We must have speaking to English talks, such as English news to develop our English".

**- *Speaking with English native speakers.***

This issue was been discussed in the results that are related to the third question. Students indicated that necessary meeting and talking with English native speakers decrease these problems, 4 students out of 20 students, (11.11%) mentioned that they have strategies to overcome the weakness through communication with native speakers. An example of that is as follows: Participant number eight said, "We should try to speak with native people at the least in Internet programs".

**- *Peer and group speaking practice***

The findings showed that conversation among students exceed many troubles respectively, as shyness, being worried, and confusion, as students' responses to overcome this problem. 4 out of 20 students (11.11%) mentioned that they have ways to overcome the weakness through the conversations among students. An example of that is as follows: Participant number one said, "We must develop the conversation skills among ourselves".

***- Making the short drills at home.***

The results appear that drills are required to any work to succeed; students' answers about overcome ways were focusing on daily drills on speaking skill at home. 4 out of 20 students (11.11%) mentioned that they have behaviors to overcome the problems. An example of that is as follows: Participant number tow said, "I expect work drills a home, it helps us to overcome this weakness".

***- Focusing on pronunciation.***

Correct pronunciation of words or structure was some of students' responses to facilitate making a conversation in a good way; the results presented, 1 out of 20 students (2.77%) mentioned that he/she has many ways to overcome the problems. An example of that is as follows: Participant number eight said, "We must focus on right ways to pronounce words".

***- Speaking English inside the classroom.***

The results confirmed that English Department lecturers must teach in English language without Arabic to give the chance for students to develop themselves in speaking skills through the university period. 1 out of 20 students, (2.77%) mentioned that he/she has solution to overcome the weakness. An example of that is as follows: Participant number thirteen said, "We must use English only in all lessons inside the classroom".

***- Development of grammar.***

The results showed that students must have ability to correct language mistakes to overcome the problems through the speaking skills, as students' responses, 1 out of 20 students, (2.77%) mentioned that he/she has solution to overcome the weakness. An example of that is as follows: One participant said, "Students should develop grammatical rules.

### ***3.3. Findings and discussion***

#### ***3.3.1. Major difficulties in speaking English of first-year English majors in speaking classes at HPU***

The results have shown that the communication difficulties faced students at HPU according to first question which dealt with the factors that cause problems and weakness of HPU in speaking skill were; limited amount of vocabulary, problems of using incorrect grammar, misunderstanding the questions, etc. the results also discovered that the reasons why learners faced the

oral communication difficulties, because they have lacked English vocabulary. This study was similar to the other studies of communication difficulties confirmed by Liu and Jackson (2008), but dissimilar with (Suleiman, 1983; Mukattash, 1983; Ibrahim, 1983). The researcher thinks that the reasons of students' weakness during oral conversations were limited participations with other universities, limited speaking with each others, and using Vietnamese inside the classroom also was a key reason that caused such problems.

### ***3.3.2. Major solutions to improve the speaking competence of first-year English majors in speaking classes at HPU***

The results showed there are many of solutions for speaking skills problems. According to the second question which is "What are some solutions to improve their English speaking skill?", the majority of participants' responses focused on practice and listening to English conversations; such as news, films and songs, with high percentages (30.55 - 27.77%). While speaking English only inside the classroom, focusing on pronunciation, and development of grammar, were the low percentages (2.77%). These results were similar with Songsiri, M (2007), and Noon-ura, S (2008). But the results dissimilar with Baily, (2005) and Goh, (2007).

## **PART III: CONCLUSION**

This chapter will deal with a summary of the major findings, limitations of the study and some suggestions for further studies.

### **1. Summary of the study**

To reach what the author aims at this study; the study is divided into four chapters with their own purpose. The first chapter briefly covers the theories related to the study. The second chapter presents the overview on situation of learning English speaking skill at FE, HPU. The third chapter presents the research methodology and author's findings of the approach to speaking at FE through the questionnaires and interview. This chapter also helps the author find the answers for three research questions that stated in the introduction. The last chapter is some recommendations and suggestions to improve English speaking skill at HPU.

### **2. Limitations of the study**

Although the study has certain strong points such as collection methods, namely interviews, survey questionnaires for students, due to limited time, lack of sources, the researcher's ability and other unexpected factors, it is obvious that the study has got a number of short-comings.

First of all, due to the limited of time, experience to some extent, the researcher could not conduct other methods such as classroom observation which can make the obtained results more reliable.

Secondly, due to the limitation of scope of the study, the researcher only focuses on the first-year students in Faculty of Foreign Language which account for a small number of students at FFL, HPU. Therefore, the result of the study can't be generalized. Besides, the researcher could not cover all the aspects of difficulties.

In addition, the techniques suggested in this research are selected from different reliable but limited sources.

In spite of the mentioned limitations, I hope that this exploratory research will contribute to the better situation of teaching and learning English speaking skill at FFL, HPU.

### **3. Suggestions for the further study**

Because of the limitation, this study could not cover all of aspects of the study. Besides, the study only focuses on difficulties for only first-year students at FFL in order to help them improve their speaking skill. Moreover, for the further studies, to get better results, the researcher should invite more participants and the data collection method with further study with seniors English majors at HPU. Together with using survey questionnaires and interviews, observation is also necessary to get more persuasive conclusions.

All in all, despite the study cannot avoid the limitations; the research has been completed under the guiding of the supervisor and self-effort. Any comments and criticism will be highly appreciated for better further study.

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# APPENDIX 1

This survey questionnaire is designed for my graduation paper namely: “A study on difficulties facing first-year English majors in English speaking skill at Haiphong Private University” in completing these questions, please choose the answer by circling the letter next to your choice, ticking off the items in a checklist or expressing your idea in the blanks. All your personal information as well as your answers will be kept confidential and not be used for the other purposes.

*Thanks for your help!*

## ***Personal information:***

1. Your gender:

A. Male

B. Female

2. How old are you?

.....

3. How long have you been learning English?

.....

### **I. Your opinion on studying speaking skill**

4. In your opinion, English speaking skill is .....

A. Very difficult

B. Difficult

C. Quite difficult

D. Not difficult

5. Do you like English speaking lessons at class?

A. I like very much

B. I like

C. I don't mind

D. I don't like

6. What do you think about the importance of English speaking skill?

A. Very important

B. Important

C. Quite important

D. Not important

E. Others .....

7. How often do you have problems in your speaking skill?

- A. Always
- B. Often
- C. Sometimes
- D. Rarely
- E. Others .....

8. What kinds of speaking texts do you expect to practice more? (Put the tick (✓) in your choice)

<b>Kinds of speaking text</b>	<b>Uninterested</b>	<b>Normal</b>	<b>Favorite</b>	<b>Most favorite</b>
A. Songs				
B. Films or stories				
C. News, speech or lecture				
D. Dialogues: conversations, interviews, etc.				

**II. The causes affecting speaking English skill**

9. Which of the following reasons make you difficult to learn speaking English?

- A. Poor equipment
- B. Unfamiliar topics
- C. Limited practice time at class
- D. Teacher
- E. Others: .....

10. What makes you interested in learning English speaking skill the most?

Items	Most influential	Influential	A bit influential	Not influential
A. Interesting topic				
B. Exciting activities				
C. Adequate modern equipment				
D. Good teaching methods				

11. What are the weaknesses for students in speaking skill?

	Weaknesses	
1	Lexical Resources	
2	Confusion, Worry, Embarrassment, Shyness and Non-Confidence.	
3	Problems of Using Incorrect Grammar	
4	Inappropriate learning method	
5	Lack of frequent English speaking practice	
6	Pronunciation Difficulties.	
7	Less Opportunity to Interact with English Native Speakers.	
8	Weak background in English.	
9	Misunderstanding the Questions.	

### III. Activities for improving English speaking skill

**Number 1-8 from the most to the least important techniques**

	Activities	( X)
1	Practice.	
2	Listening to English, Songs, News, Films and, Conversations.	
3	Speaking with English Native Speakers.	
4	Peer and Group speaking practice.	
5	Make the Short Drills at Home.	
6	Focusing on Pronunciation.	
7	Speaking English inside the Classroom.	
8	Development of Grammar.	

**Thank you very much for your cooperation!**