BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO

TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH : NGÔN NGỮ ANH

Sinh viên : Nguyễn Vũ Quỳnh Chi

HẢI PHÒNG – 2025

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TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH - KOREAN MAJORED STUDENTS IN LEARNING SPEAKING AT HPU AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY

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Tên đề tài: Difficulties encountered by first-year English - Korean majored students in learning speaking at HPU and some suggested solutions

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NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI

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CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên   : Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương

Học hàm, học vị : Thạc Sĩ Ngôn Ngữ Anh

Cơ quan công tác : Trường Đại học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Nội dung hướng dẫn : Difficulties encountered by first-year English - Korean majored students in learning speaking at HPU and some suggested solutions

Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày tháng năm 2025

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày tháng năm 2025

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN   Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

   Sinh viên   *Giảng viên hướng dẫn*

  Nguyễn Vũ Quỳnh Chi   ThS. Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2025

XÁC NHẬN CỦA KHOA

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Họ và tên giảng viên: Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương
Đơn vị công tác: Trường Đại Học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng
Họ và tên sinh viên: Nguyễn Vũ Quỳnh Chi
   Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh
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1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp

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2. Đánh giá chất lượng của đồ án/khóa luận (so với nội dung yêu cầu đã đề ra trong nhiệm vụ Đ.T. T.N trên các mặt lý luận, thực tiễn, tính toán số liệu…)

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên hướng dẫn tốt nghiệp

Được bảo vệ ☐   Không được bảo vệ ☐   Điểm hướng dẫn ☐

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm ......

Giảng viên hướng dẫn

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN CHẤM PHẢN BIỆN

Họ và tên giảng viên: ....

Đơn vị công tác: Trường Đại học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng

Họ và tên sinh viên: Nguyễn Vũ Quỳnh Chi

Chuyên ngành: Ngôn ngữ Anh

Đề tài tốt nghiệp: Difficulties encountered by first-year English - Korean

majored students in learning speaking at HPU and some

suggested solutions

1. Phần nhận xét của giáo viên chấm phản biện

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2. Những mặt còn hạn chế

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3. Ý kiến của giảng viên chấm phản biện

Được bảo vệ ☐   Không được bảo vệ ☐   Điểm hướng dẫn ☐

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm ......

Giảng viên chấm phản biện

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Hai Phong, … th May 2025

Student

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the difficulties in learning speaking faced by first-year English–Korean majored students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU). The research adopts a quantitative approach using a bilingual questionnaire to gather data on students' perceptions, learning habits, and preferences for instructional support. Through a survey conducted with a certain number of students, the study identifies the most common linguistic barriers such as limited vocabulary, grammar interference, and reduced fluency, as well as psychological factors including anxiety and lack of confidence. Environmental constraints like limited speaking time, minimal feedback, and unsupportive classroom conditions were also reported. Based on the results, the study recommends solutions to help bilingual students learn speaking better. The findings also offer recommendations for teachers to improve their teaching methods effectively.

Key words: learning speaking, difficulties, English-Korean

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale of the study

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in language acquisition, as it enables learners to communicate effectively in real-life situations. In the context of learning a foreign language, speaking skills are considered a crucial aspect of language proficiency since they allow individuals to express thoughts, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful conversations. For students majoring in English-Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology, mastering speaking skills in both languages is particularly important, as their future careers may involve translation, interpretation, teaching, or international communication.

However, many first-year English-Korean majored students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology struggle with speaking skills, which negatively impacts their academic performance and communication abilities. Some students find it difficult to construct grammatically correct sentences, while others experience anxiety and hesitation when speaking. Additionally, pronunciation issues, lack of vocabulary, and insufficient exposure to practical speaking environments contribute to their struggles. These challenges not only hinder their academic progress but also reduce their confidence in using English and Korean in real-life situations.

Given the increasing importance of multilingual communication in the globalized world, addressing these difficulties is essential. If students cannot develop their speaking skills effectively, they may face significant obstacles in their studies and future careers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the specific difficulties that first-year English-Korean majored students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology encounter in learning speaking and to propose practical solutions that can enhance their learning experience.

By identifying the key factors affecting students' speaking abilities, this study will provide valuable insights for students, instructors, and curriculum designers. Understanding these difficulties will enable educators to develop more effective teaching methods, while students can adopt better learning strategies to improve their speaking proficiency. The findings of this research will contribute to enhancing the overall quality of language education at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology and help students gain the confidence needed to communicate fluently in both English and Korean.

1.2. Research aims and objectives

This study aims to investigate the specific problems these students face in learning to speak both English and Korean and propose practical solutions to enhance their speaking performances. The study also provides concrete recommendations for teachers to improve speaking skill development in foreign language teaching.

1.3. Research questions

To achieve the research objectives, this study is guided by the following questions:

- What are the main difficulties encountered by first-year English-Korean majored students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology in learning speaking skills?

- What solutions can be implemented to help students improve their speaking proficiency?

These research questions will serve as the foundation for data collection and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive investigation into students' challenges and potential solutions.

1.4. Scope of the study

This study focuses on first-year students majoring in English-Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology, as they are in the initial stage of language learning and may experience significant challenges in

developing their speaking skills. The study specifically examines difficulties related to speaking, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, confidence, and speaking strategies.

The research does not cover other language skills such as listening, reading, writing, or translation. Additionally, while the study investigates the speaking difficulties in both English and Korean, the primary emphasis is on the challenges faced when learning to speak English, as it is often perceived as more difficult due to differences in phonetics, grammar, and cultural aspects.

The data collection will be conducted through surveys and interviews with a selected group of first-year students. The findings will be analyzed to provide insights into the common difficulties and possible solutions for improving students' speaking skills.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study holds significant value for multiple stakeholders in language education. For students, it provides a deeper understanding of the common obstacles in speaking and offers strategies to enhance their proficiency. Students can adopt more effective learning techniques to improve their speaking abilities by identifying specific linguistic and psychological barriers. Teachers and curriculum developers will also benefit from the findings, as they can utilize the research outcomes to design better instructional methods, classroom activities, and assessment strategies that support students' speaking development. Moreover, educational institutions can use the insights gained from this research to refine their language programs, ensuring that first-year students receive adequate support and resources to enhance their speaking skills. Lastly, this study can serve as a reference for future researchers interested in bilingual language learning challenges and potential solutions, contributing to the broader field of language education.

1.6. Organization of the study

This thesis is divided into three parts, which are structured as follows:

Part I: Introduction

This part provides the foundation of the research by outlining the background and rationale of the study, identifying the specific research aims and objectives, and presenting the key research questions that guide the investigation. It also defines the scope of the research, clarifies its significance for students, teachers, and educational institutions, and explains the overall structure of the thesis. The information in this part sets the stage for the following chapters by establishing the motivation, relevance, and direction of the study.

Part II: Development

Chapter 1: Theoretical basis of the study – This chapter provides definitions and theoretical perspectives on speaking skills, factors affecting speaking ability, and an overview of previous studies related to speaking difficulties in language learning.

Chapter 2: Research methodology – This chapter describes the research design, participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods used in the study.

Chapter 3: Findings and discussion – This chapter presents the results of the study, including students' reported difficulties, their causes, and students' attitudes toward speaking practice. The findings are compared with previous studies to identify key insights.

Chapter 4: Suggested solutions – This chapter offers practical recommendations for students, teachers, and Hai Phong University of Management and Technology's language program to improve speaking skills.

Part III: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the key findings, discusses the implications for teaching and learning, highlights the study's limitations, and suggests some solutions for future research.

PART II: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1.1. The definition of speaking skill

Speaking is an essential skill that language learners must develop alongside listening, reading, and writing skills. It involves the active exchange of information, the expression of ideas and emotions, and the effective transmission of messages through both verbal and non-verbal communication methods, including gestures and facial expressions.

According to Thornbury (2005), speaking is a highly interactive skill requiring real-time communication, where speakers engage in the immediate exchange of meanings and ideas. Similarly, Richards (2008) emphasizes that effective speaking involves the simultaneous coordination of language production and comprehension, highlighting the need for fluency and accuracy to ensure clear and meaningful communication.

Bailey (2005) further elaborates that speaking proficiency encompasses the ability to produce fluent, coherent, and culturally appropriate language in diverse situations. This definition underscores the importance of context and cultural awareness as integral components of communicative competence, essential for effective speaking performance in real-life scenarios.

Moreover, Luoma (2004) stresses the multidimensional nature of speaking skills, involving pronunciation clarity, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary appropriateness, and discourse management skills. These components collectively contribute to speakers' overall communicative effectiveness, ensuring their messages are comprehensible and engaging to listeners.

Additionally, Goh and Burns (2012) argue that speaking competence involves cognitive and metacognitive strategies enabling learners to plan, monitor, and regulate their speaking performance. Their perspective highlights the importance of strategic thinking and reflective practice in developing

speaking skills, helping learners become more autonomous and proficient communicators.

In the context of second language acquisition, effective speaking skills significantly impact learners' academic achievement, personal development, and professional success. Hence, language education programs must prioritize comprehensive speaking skill development, addressing linguistic knowledge, cognitive agility, communicative fluency, and socio-cultural sensitivity.

In conclusion, speaking skills are complex, multifaceted, and vital for effective communication. They require continuous development through targeted educational practices that emphasize interaction, strategic competence, linguistic precision, and cultural awareness to enable learners to communicate confidently and effectively in various contexts.

2.1.2. Types of speaking

Speaking can be classified into several distinct types based on the context in which it occurs and the communicative purpose it serves. Understanding these types is essential for both language educators and learners, as it allows for more targeted instruction and practice tailored to real-world communication needs. Generally, speaking can be grouped into three main categories including interactive speaking, transactional speaking, and monologic speaking. Each of these categories requires different skills, strategies, and levels of linguistic control.

2.1.2.1. Interactive speaking

Interactive speaking refers to face-to-face or virtual conversations in which participants are actively involved in exchanging information in real time. This type of speaking is highly dynamic and relies heavily on both verbal and non-verbal feedback. It includes everyday dialogues, casual conversations, interviews, group discussions, and debates. A key feature of interactive speaking is the back-and-forth nature of communication, where speakers must listen

attentively, respond quickly, ask for clarification, and adjust their language based on the interlocutor's reactions.

According to Bygate (1987), interactive speaking involves the negotiation of meaning between speakers and requires the use of appropriate turn-taking, clarification, and feedback strategies. In interactive speaking, communicative competence involves not only fluency and accuracy but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic awareness. For instance, learners must understand turn-taking conventions, politeness strategies, and culturally appropriate expressions to maintain smooth interaction. This type of speaking is often spontaneous and unpredictable, making it a critical focus in speaking instruction, especially for learners preparing to use the language in social or academic environments.

2.1.2.2. Transactional speaking

While interactive speaking emphasizes relationship-building and informal exchanges, transactional speaking is primarily concerned with the exchange of specific information, often in professional or instructional contexts. This type of speaking occurs in situations where the goal is to complete a task, give directions, solve problems, or share factual information. Examples include classroom instructions, business negotiations, customer service exchanges, and medical consultations.

Brown and Yule (1983) distinguished between interactional and transactional speech, noting that transactional speaking focuses on transferring factual or practical information with an emphasis on clarity and efficiency. The speaker's primary goal is to ensure that the listener understands the message exactly as intended, which demands the use of appropriate vocabulary, coherent sentence structure, and logical sequencing. It also requires the speaker to anticipate potential misunderstandings and use clarification strategies when necessary. In teaching speaking, transactional contexts are crucial for preparing learners for workplace communication and academic presentations.

2.1.2.3. Monologic speaking

Monologic speaking refers to instances where one speaker dominates the discourse without expecting immediate feedback from an interlocutor. It is often formal, prepared, and delivered in front of an audience. Common examples of monologic speaking include speeches, presentations, storytelling, and lectures. This type of speaking demands advanced planning, organizational skills, and rhetorical competence.

Burns and Joyce (1997) describe monologic speaking as extended discourse in which the speaker takes the floor for a relatively long time to convey a message to an audience, requiring planning, organization, and control of content and language. In monologic speaking, the speaker is responsible for maintaining the listeners' attention, structuring the content logically, and using language persuasively or informatively, depending on the purpose. It places significant emphasis on coherence, fluency, appropriate transitions, and engagement strategies. While it may appear more controlled than conversational speaking, it still requires adaptability, especially during live presentations where unexpected questions or reactions from the audience may occur.

2.1.3. Functions of speaking

Speaking serves a wide range of functions that extend far beyond the simple exchange of information. Recognizing these functions allows educators to design instructional activities that reflect the complexity of real-life communication and help learners develop competence in different social, academic, and professional settings. According to Brown and Yule (1983), the functions of spoken language can be broadly divided into two main categories: the transactional function, which is primarily concerned with the transfer of information, and the interactional function, which focuses on the establishment and maintenance of social relationships.

They also emphasize that in addition to transactional and interactional uses, spoken language also serves expressive and identity purposes, allowing speakers

to express feelings, attitudes, and personal reactions, which are essential for authentic and meaningful communication. By integrating these perspectives, language teaching can address the multifaceted nature of speaking and help learners develop the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in both formal and informal settings.

2.1.3.1. Transactional function

The transactional function of speaking focuses on the clear and effective exchange of information. In this context, communication is goal-oriented, and the primary purpose is to deliver or obtain specific messages. This function is prominent in professional or academic environments, such as giving instructions, asking for clarification, giving directions, or making requests. The emphasis here is on clarity, precision, and efficiency. As stated by Richards (2008), transactional language is language used primarily to convey factual or procedural information, and is characterized by short, clear exchanges where accuracy is prioritized. The speaker must ensure that their message is understood correctly, which often involves checking comprehension, repeating key points, or rephrasing when necessary.

2.1.3.2. Interactional function

The interactional function of speaking is centered on building and maintaining social relationships. It plays a crucial role in human interaction, as it allows individuals to establish connections, express solidarity, and maintain social harmony. Everyday conversations, greetings, small talk, and social pleasantries are examples of this function. Language use in this context tends to be more formulaic and emotionally expressive, often relying on shared cultural norms and social expectations.

According to Brown and Yule (1983), interactional language is used primarily to establish and sustain interpersonal relationships rather than to exchange information. They argue that this function is typically realized through informal and affective speech acts, such as greetings, compliments, or

expressions of sympathy. Similarly, Richards (2008) emphasizes that interactional speaking serves the purpose of social bonding and community building, which is essential in both native and second language use.

Educators must recognize that while transactional speech is important for functionality, interactional speech is equally critical for learners to feel confident in natural, spontaneous communication. Activities that mimic casual conversations or involve peer collaboration are especially useful for developing this type of communicative competence.

2.1.3.3. Expressive and identity functions

Speaking also fulfills expressive functions, enabling speakers to communicate their emotions, opinions, values, and personal identity. Learners use spoken language to express agreement or disagreement, share personal experiences, and assert individuality. These expressions are often shaped by context, tone, and cultural background, contributing not only to message delivery but also to the speaker's presence and personality in communication.

According to Thornbury (2005), the expressive function of speaking is central to authentic language use, as it allows learners to connect personally with what they say, fostering motivation and emotional engagement in the learning process. He emphasizes that when learners speak from personal relevance, they are more likely to be fluent, involved, and communicative.

Similarly, Halliday (1975) includes the expressive (or "personal") function in his taxonomy of language functions, describing it as the speaker's means to express feelings, attitudes, and opinions. This function reflects the speaker's individuality and stance, making it crucial for developing a sense of voice and identity in a second language.

In addition, speaking is a way to perform one's social identity. Choices in pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse style reflect the speaker's cultural background, social status, or group membership. Teaching should incorporate

opportunities for students to explore and express themselves, while also helping them understand how speaking varies across contexts and audiences.

2.1.4. Components of speaking

Speaking is not a single, uniform ability; rather, it is composed of several interrelated components that work together to enable effective verbal communication. These components must be developed simultaneously to achieve fluency, coherence, and communicative success. The following subsections describe each component in detail.

2.1.4.1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the accurate production of sounds, including individual phonemes, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, and rhythm. It is one of the most visible components of speaking, and errors in pronunciation can greatly affect intelligibility. Learners often face difficulties due to differences between their native language and the target language's phonological system. For example, Vietnamese learners may struggle with English sounds like /θ/ and /ð/, or the intonation patterns used in question forms.

Teaching pronunciation should not be limited to isolated sounds; it must also focus on suprasegmental features such as intonation, linking, and stress patterns, which contribute to natural-sounding speech. Effective pronunciation instruction includes both awareness-raising and production practice, using models, repetition, and corrective feedback.

2.1.4.2. Fluency

Fluency is defined as the ability to speak smoothly, with natural pacing and minimal hesitation. A fluent speaker can express ideas continuously without frequent pauses, self-corrections, or fillers. According to Nation and Newton (2009), fluency is developed through repeated practice in low-stress environments, where learners are encouraged to focus on meaning rather than form. Activities such as timed speaking, information gap tasks, and storytelling are particularly useful in developing fluency. Importantly, fluency does not

mean speaking fast; it refers to maintaining a steady flow of speech that listeners can easily follow and understand.

2.1.4.3. Grammar

Grammar in speaking refers to the correct use of sentence structure, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, and other language rules that contribute to coherence and clarity. While some grammar errors may not hinder communication, consistent inaccuracy can lead to confusion or misinterpretation. Spontaneous speech presents particular challenges for grammar use, as learners must construct grammatically correct sentences in real-time. Instruction should include grammar in context - using dialogues, role-plays, and communicative drills that allow students to apply grammatical structures naturally in speaking.

2.1.4.4. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the foundation of meaningful communication. Without sufficient lexical resources, learners struggle to express themselves clearly, often resorting to vague or repetitive language. Effective speakers can select precise, context-appropriate words and phrases to convey nuanced meanings and intentions.

Teaching vocabulary for speaking requires an emphasis on both receptive and productive knowledge. Learners should not only recognize words when they hear them but also be able to recall and use them actively. Strategies include thematic vocabulary instruction, collocations, and phrase-building activities.

2.1.4.5. Comprehension

Comprehension in speaking involves the ability to understand others and respond appropriately. Since speaking is inherently interactive, comprehension allows for effective turn-taking, clarification, negotiation of meaning, and responsiveness. A speaker who does not understand the listener's input cannot maintain meaningful communication.

Comprehension is tightly linked with listening skills and should be developed in tandem. Teachers should incorporate interactive tasks where students practice responding to questions, reacting to statements, and following complex instructions, thereby reinforcing the comprehension–production connection.

2.1.5. Difficulties in learning speaking foreign language

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most complex and demanding language skills for foreign language learners. Unlike receptive skills such as reading or listening, speaking requires real-time language processing and production, involving the spontaneous use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic strategies. According to Nunan (1999), speaking is not only the most difficult skill to master but also the one that requires the highest level of active engagement, as it directly exposes the speaker's language proficiency in public situations. Learners must simultaneously manage linguistic accuracy, fluency, and interactive appropriateness - all under the pressure of limited planning time and social evaluation.

2.1.5.1. Linguistic challenges

Linguistic barriers are perhaps the most immediately noticeable obstacles to effective speaking. Learners must coordinate multiple language subsystems while speaking, including:

* Pronunciation

Pronunciation poses a major challenge because the sound systems of foreign languages often differ significantly from learners' native tongues. Learners may struggle with unfamiliar phonemes, syllable stress, intonation patterns, and rhythm. For example, Vietnamese learners typically have difficulty distinguishing certain English or Korean consonants that do not exist in Vietnamese (e.g., /θ/, /ð/ in English or aspirated vs. unaspirated consonants in Korean like ㅂ vs ㅍ). According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin

(2010), these pronunciation challenges not only reduce intelligibility but also lower learners' confidence in speaking situations.

* Grammar

Grammatical control during speech is another persistent difficulty. Unlike writing, where learners have time to revise and edit, speaking demands real-time sentence construction. Learners often default to simple structures, omit necessary function words, or make agreement and tense-related errors. For instance, a learner might say, "He go to school yesterday," instead of "He went to school yesterday." Errors like these can confuse listeners and disrupt communication. Ellis (2008) explains that spontaneous grammar production requires the internalization and automatization of structures through frequent use in speaking contexts.

* Vocabulary

Speaking fluency is also heavily dependent on vocabulary knowledge. Learners with a limited lexicon may rely on vague terms ("thing," "stuff"), repeat words, or use incorrect expressions. Nation (2001) emphasizes that vocabulary proficiency must include not only knowledge of individual words but also familiarity with collocations, idioms, and contextually appropriate expressions. Without these, learners' speech may lack precision, naturalness, and depth of meaning.

* Fluency

Fluency is defined by the ability to speak smoothly with minimal hesitation or self-correction. According to Thornbury (2005), disfluency is common among learners due to limited retrieval speed and the mental effort required to coordinate multiple language components. Students may pause frequently, repeat words, or rely on fillers ("uh," "um") while trying to formulate thoughts. This makes speech appear broken and affects listener comprehension.

2.1.5.2. Psychological factors

Apart from linguistic competence, learners' emotional and psychological states play a critical role in their speaking performance.

* Language anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a well-documented phenomenon, particularly in speaking. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) describe it as a distinct form of anxiety specific to the language classroom, often stemming from fear of making mistakes, negative peer evaluation, and performance pressure. Learners may feel nervous or embarrassed, leading to avoidance of speaking situations or complete silence during discussions.

* Lack of confidence and motivation

Low self-confidence, often rooted in past failures or perfectionism, can significantly affect a student's willingness to speak. Learners may compare themselves to more fluent peers and feel discouraged. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that learner motivation and confidence are essential for language development, especially in speaking, where performance is publicly observable and often evaluated.

2.1.5.3. Limited exposure to authentic speaking opportunities

* Artificial learning contexts

When speaking is practiced in class, it is often limited to controlled drills or scripted dialogues, which do not mimic natural speech. Gass and Selinker (2008) argue that second language acquisition is most effective when learners engage in meaningful interaction with other speakers, particularly in unpredictable, spontaneous settings. The absence of such contexts means learners may know the rules of speaking but cannot apply them effectively in real-life situations.

* Lack of interaction with fluent or native speakers

Another issue is the limited access to proficient interlocutors. Many learners only speak with classmates who are also learners, and rarely interact

with native or fluent speakers who can model appropriate pronunciation, idiomatic language, and cultural norms. This lack of input and corrective feedback delays the development of both accuracy and fluency.

2.1.5.4. Instructional and methodological limitations

The way speaking is taught - or neglected - in many language programs also contributes to learners' difficulties.

* Overemphasis on accuracy

In traditional classrooms, there is often a disproportionate focus on grammatical correctness and written exercises. Learners may be penalized for speaking errors, leading to reluctance to participate. According to Nunan (1991), this focus on form discourages experimentation and communicative risk-taking, both of which are essential for oral fluency.

* Limited speaking time in class

Large class sizes, time constraints, and rigid curricula leave little room for extended speaking practice. Teachers may ask individual students to answer short questions, but rarely create opportunities for sustained interaction, such as debates, role-plays, or problem-solving tasks. As a result, speaking becomes a marginal activity, not a core part of language instruction.

* Lack of individualized feedback

In overcrowded classes, teachers may be unable to monitor and correct each student's speech in detail. Learners do not receive enough targeted feedback on pronunciation, grammar, or usage, which is crucial for progress.

In summary, learners of foreign languages face a complex set of interrelated challenges when it comes to speaking. These include phonological and grammatical difficulties, limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and pragmatic errors. Additionally, psychological factors such as anxiety and low confidence, coupled with insufficient exposure to real communication and outdated instructional methods, further inhibit speaking development. Recognizing and

addressing these difficulties through appropriate pedagogical strategies is essential for fostering effective spoken language acquisition.

2.1.5.5. Cognitive overload in learning two foreign languages concurrently

For students enrolled in bilingual language programs, such as English-Korean majors, the process of acquiring speaking skills in two foreign languages at the same time presents a distinct set of cognitive and emotional challenges. Unlike learners who focus on a single target language, bilingual students must navigate two different linguistic systems simultaneously - each with its own grammar rules, pronunciation patterns, vocabulary sets, and cultural expectations. This dual demand can lead to what Sweller (1988) describes as *cognitive overload*, a state in which working memory becomes overwhelmed by the complexity and volume of information being processed.

Vietnamese learners, in particular, often experience interference between English and Korean. For instance, students may unconsciously apply English stress patterns to Korean words or use Korean sentence structures when speaking English. These transfer errors are common and natural in bilingual language acquisition but can hinder fluency and clarity if not addressed with explicit instruction and practice.

In addition, the need to divide time, attention, and cognitive effort between two languages frequently results in imbalanced language development. Students may prioritize one language - typically English, due to prior exposure - while Korean receives less consistent practice, leading to slower progress and reduced confidence in oral communication.

Emotional and psychological effects are also more pronounced in dual-language contexts. Learners may feel frustrated by their perceived lack of progress, anxious about speaking in either language, or unsure of which rules apply in a given context. These challenges are often intensified in high-pressure classroom environments, where students are expected to perform in both languages without sufficient scaffolding or differentiated instruction.

2.1.6. Previous studies on speaking difficulties

2.1.6.1. Difficulties in speaking English

Despite years of formal instruction, many Vietnamese students continue to experience persistent challenges in English speaking. These difficulties are not only linguistic but also psychological and cultural in nature.

* Phonological issues

The English sound system differs significantly from Vietnamese, especially in terms of consonants and stress patterns. Learners often struggle with dental fricatives (/θ/ as in think, /ð/ as in this), final consonant clusters (e.g., text, asked), and word stress. These issues may lead to unintelligible speech or miscommunication.

Furthermore, English is a stress-timed language, whereas Vietnamese is syllable-timed. This difference in rhythm and intonation contributes to unnatural speech delivery and limits learners' ability to convey emotion or intent effectively. These challenges are rarely addressed explicitly in classroom instruction, leaving students unsure of how to self-correct.

* Grammatical and structural challenges

Even with years of exposure, English grammar remains difficult for many learners. Problems with verb tense consistency, auxiliary verbs, and subject-verb agreement are especially common. These issues often stem from over-reliance on written grammar rules, which are not always transferable to spontaneous speech.

In addition, Vietnamese is an isolating language with minimal inflection, whereas English uses various morphological markers to express tense, number, and aspect. This structural difference creates frequent errors in spontaneous oral production, particularly under pressure.

* Fluency and confidence

Although students may know vocabulary and grammar rules, they often struggle with speaking fluently due to a lack of real communicative practice.

Many students hesitate, pause frequently, or use filler words excessively. According to Tuan and Mai (2015), these fluency issues are compounded by anxiety and a lack of self-confidence - common outcomes of a test-oriented education system that prioritizes reading and writing over oral interaction.

2.1.6.2. Difficulties in speaking Korean

Korean, often introduced to students only at the university level, poses a new set of challenges for Vietnamese learners, especially in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and socio-cultural norms.

* Pronunciation and sound system

The Korean language includes consonants and vowels that are phonetically distinct from both English and Vietnamese. Many learners struggle to distinguish between aspirated (e.g., ㅋ /kʰ/) and unaspirated (ㄱ /k/) sounds, as well as tense consonants (e.g., ㄲ, ㄸ, ㅃ). Vowel length and tone also influence meaning but are difficult for beginners to master without intensive phonetic training.

Additionally, Korean uses a syllable-based writing system (Hangul), which must be internalized both visually and phonetically. For learners unfamiliar with reading phonetically written scripts, this presents a dual challenge of decoding and pronunciation.

* Grammar and sentence structure

Korean grammar is agglutinative and highly inflected, relying on various suffixes to express tense, mood, politeness, and respect. Its sentence structure follows a Subject–Object–Verb (SOV) order, in contrast to the Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) structure of English and Vietnamese. As a result, students often misplace sentence components or fail to conjugate verbs correctly in speech.

Honorifics and speech levels also present challenges. Learners must adjust their speech based on the social status of their interlocutor, which requires not only linguistic knowledge but also socio-cultural sensitivity. This aspect of

Korean is often unfamiliar to Vietnamese students and is a major source of hesitation and error during speaking activities.

* Limited background exposure

Unlike English, which Vietnamese students have been exposed to from an early age through media and school, Korean is relatively new. As a result, students lack both input and output opportunities outside the classroom. This limited exposure significantly slows down the development of listening comprehension and spontaneous speaking skills.

2.1.6.3. Comparative difficulties and cognitive load

Simultaneously learning to speak both English and Korean intensifies the cognitive demands placed on students. Each language involves distinct phonological, grammatical, and pragmatic systems. Learners must shift between different sentence structures (SVO vs. SOV), pronunciation patterns, and levels of formality, all while maintaining accuracy and fluency. According to Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory, managing such dual systems without adequate scaffolding may overwhelm working memory and impair performance.

Additionally, interference between languages may occur. For instance, students may unintentionally apply English stress patterns to Korean words, or use Korean word order when speaking English. These transfer errors are natural but require explicit instruction and practice to overcome.

2.1.6.4. Student perceptions and learning behaviors

Understanding how learners perceive their own speaking difficulties and how they respond to these challenges is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of their language development process. While linguistic and psychological barriers play a central role in shaping speaking performance, students' beliefs, attitudes, and learning strategies also influence their progress.

* Learners' awareness of speaking challenges

Many students are fully aware of their difficulties in speaking both English and Korean. In informal reflections and class-based discussions, learners

frequently identify areas such as pronunciation, grammar usage, and lack of fluency as major concerns. However, their levels of self-awareness vary. For instance, some students recognize the need to improve specific features like intonation or sentence structure but lack the strategies to do so, while others attribute their struggles to fixed limitations such as "not being good at languages."

This aligns with findings by Wenden (1991), who notes that learners with a higher degree of metacognitive awareness tend to be more effective at self-regulating their learning. Unfortunately, many first-year students, especially in non-immersion environments, have not yet developed the ability to monitor or evaluate their speaking performance critically.

* Motivation and emotional response

Motivation is a key factor that shapes students' persistence in learning to speak foreign languages. Learners who are instrumentally motivated - those who study for academic or professional advancement - may approach language learning as a task to be completed, while those with integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985) - those who seek to engage with the culture and community - are more likely to enjoy and actively participate in speaking practice.

However, emotional responses such as fear of speaking, embarrassment, or past negative experiences often outweigh motivation, especially when students are placed in high-pressure or highly evaluative speaking environments. This creates what Krashen (1982) termed the Affective Filter, where learners become emotionally blocked from processing input or producing output effectively.

* Common learning behaviors

In response to speaking difficulties, students tend to adopt coping strategies that may or may not support long-term development. For example:

- Some students avoid speaking altogether in class, hoping to avoid making mistakes or being noticed.

- Others rely heavily on memorized scripts or translation-based preparation, which limits their ability to respond spontaneously in conversations.

- A small group of more proactive learners engage in self-study, using apps, media, or peer interaction to improve their speaking fluency outside the classroom.

While these behaviors reflect a natural response to difficulty, they also reveal gaps in learner training. Without explicit support in developing autonomous learning habits, many students fall into cycles of avoidance, repetition, or minimal-risk participation.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.2.1. Sample and sampling

The target population of this study consisted of sixteen first-year students majoring in English-Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. All available first-year students in this major during the academic term were invited to participate. Most participants were around 19 years old and had studied English for at least ten years through the Vietnamese education system, while Korean was introduced only at the university level.

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher to focus specifically on individuals who were most relevant to the research questions - namely, students currently experiencing the challenges of developing speaking skills. By selecting the entire cohort of available first-year English-Korean majors, the study ensured that the data would comprehensively represent the target group's perceptions and experiences.

2.2.2. Instruments

The primary research instrument employed in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to collect data related to the speaking difficulties of first-year English–Korean majored students. The questionnaire was carefully constructed to ensure clarity, relevance, and ease of comprehension, and was presented bilingually in English and Vietnamese to facilitate full understanding among participants.

The questionnaire consisted of two main parts:

Part I: Personal information, aimed at gathering background details such as gender, age, and duration of English and Korean language study.

Part II: Students' opinions on learning English and Korean, which focused on their perceptions of the importance of speaking, levels of confidence in each language, learning habits, specific speaking challenges, and preferred support strategies.

The survey included a combination of question types:

- Closed-ended multiple-choice questions (e.g., gender, language confidence)

- Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1 - Strongly disagree to 5 - Strongly agree) to assess perceived difficulties in speaking

- Multiple-response items (allowing students to tick multiple applicable strategies for improving speaking skills)

- Open-ended options in some questions to capture additional student opinions and suggestions.

The questionnaire covered key dimensions relevant to speaking development, including:

- Linguistic challenges (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency)

- Psychological factors (anxiety, motivation, confidence)

- Learning behaviors (practice time, study habits)

- Environmental influences (teaching style, feedback, learning environment)

- Preferred methods of speaking improvement (use of technology, speaking activities, teacher support)

A total of 16 students voluntarily completed the questionnaire. No pilot testing or significant post-distribution modifications were conducted, as the questionnaire design was based on previously validated structures from similar educational studies and reviewed by academic advisors prior to administration.

The researcher also has some interviews with students randomly to encure the reliability of the results.

The responses collected provided a comprehensive data set for analyzing the common difficulties students encounter in developing speaking skills in both English and Korean, as well as their perspectives on potential solutions.

2.2.3. Data collection

The data collection process for this study was conducted in an offline setting. All sixteen participants were students majoring in English-Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires during scheduled class meetings, ensuring that participants had a quiet and supportive environment in which to complete the survey.

Before distribution, students were provided with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and assurances of confidentiality. They were informed that all responses would be used solely for academic research and would remain anonymous to protect their identities. Verbal consent was obtained prior to the administration of the questionnaire.

Each student was given ample time to carefully read and complete the questionnaire. The researcher was present throughout the session to clarify any questions or uncertainties regarding the items, thereby minimizing misunderstandings and enhancing the reliability of the collected data. Participants answered all parts of the survey in one sitting, and no questionnaires were left incomplete.

After the collection, all responses were reviewed to verify their completeness and coherence. The use of a controlled, face-to-face collection method allowed for the immediate clarification of any ambiguities and minimized the risk of missing data or inconsistent entries, thereby enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the dataset.

2.2.4. Data analysis

Upon completion of data collection, the responses were systematically coded and organized using Microsoft Excel for preliminary processing. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentage calculations. These statistics were used to

identify trends in students' reported speaking difficulties, their perceptions of learning strategies, and their preferences regarding teaching practices.

Likert-scale responses measuring students' perceptions of their speaking difficulties were averaged to identify the most prominent barriers faced by learners. Closed-ended multiple-choice questions were analyzed by calculating the proportion of students selecting each option, providing insights into general patterns in student attitudes and experiences.

For items that allowed multiple responses, the frequency with which each option was selected was tallied to assess students' preferred strategies for improving speaking skills and their suggestions for teacher interventions.

The analysis was carried out carefully to ensure objectivity, consistency, and alignment with the research questions. The findings were subsequently synthesized and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and previous studies, forming the basis for the conclusions and recommendations of the thesis.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

2.3.1. Overview of the participants

The participants of this study consisted of 16 first-year students majoring in English–Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. All respondents were female, accounting for 100% of the sample, which reflects the gender distribution typical in language-major programs in Vietnam.

In terms of age, the majority of students (11 out of 16) were 19 years old, corresponding to 68.8% of the sample. Two students were 20 years old (12.5%), and three students were 21 years old (18.7%). This age range is representative of freshmen cohorts who have recently transitioned from high school into university education.

Regarding language learning backgrounds, English had been part of the participants' formal education for a considerable period. Specifically, one student had studied English for 7 years, three students for 10 years, three students for 11 years, six students for 12 years, and three students for 13 years. These figures indicate that most participants had over a decade of experience learning English through the Vietnamese educational system, emphasizing a long-term, although primarily academic-focused, exposure to the language.

In contrast, Korean was a relatively new addition to their language repertoire. Fifteen students had been learning Korean for less than one year, and only one student had approximately 15 months of Korean study experience. This considerable difference in language exposure reflects the bilingual challenge faced by these learners, as they were simultaneously required to develop speaking proficiency in a familiar foreign language (English) and a newly introduced one (Korean).

The demographic and linguistic profiles of the participants provide essential context for interpreting the subsequent findings. They highlight the cognitive, emotional, and environmental demands placed on learners managing two foreign languages concurrently at the early stages of university education.

2.3.2. Learners' perceptions of speaking skills

Students' perceptions of the importance and difficulty of speaking skills were explored to better understand their motivation and attitudes toward oral communication in both languages.
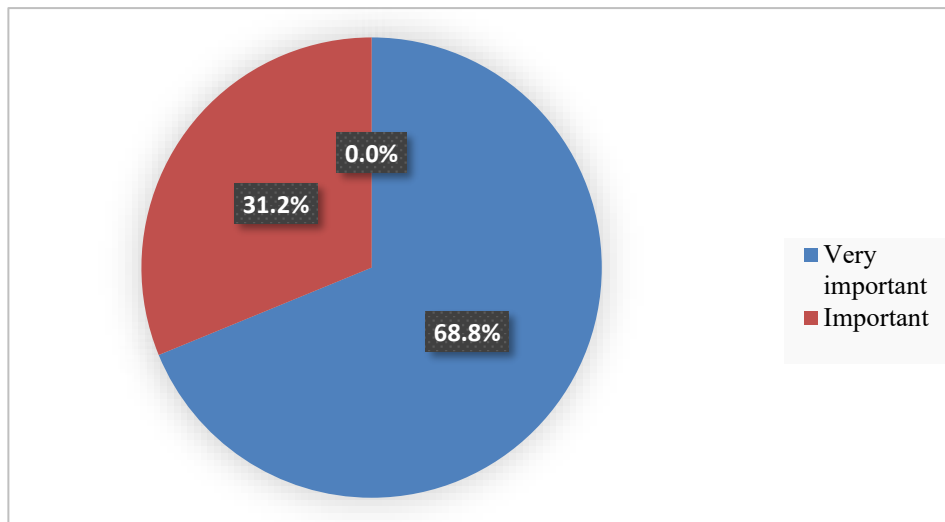

Chart 1: The importance of speaking foreign languages

When asked about the significance of speaking in foreign language learning, 68.8% of the participants rated it as "very important," while the remaining 31.2% considered it "important." None of the students regarded speaking as unimportant. This finding underscores the high value students placed on oral skills, recognizing speaking as an essential component of overall language proficiency, not merely an ancillary skill.
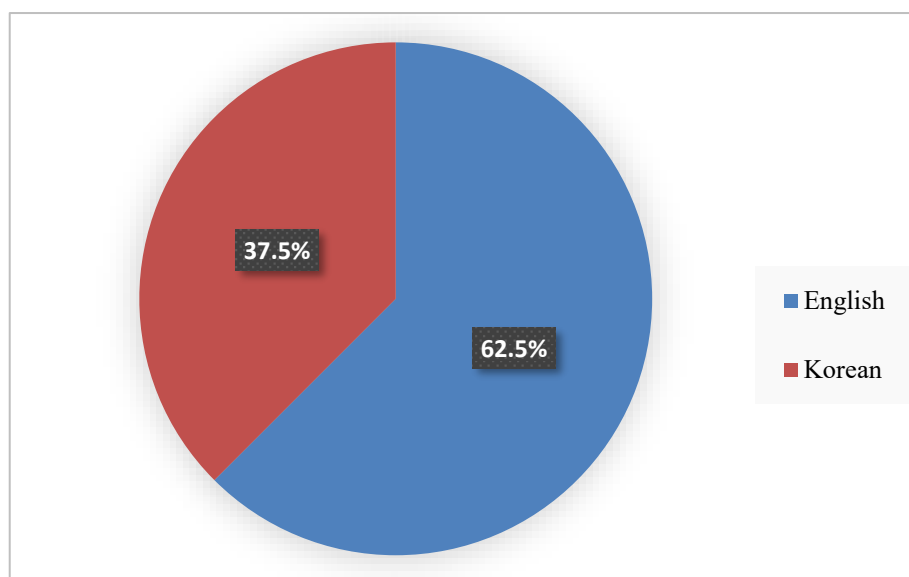
Chart 2: Students' confidence in learning speaking skill

In terms of language confidence, 62.5% of the students reported feeling more confident speaking English, whereas 37.5% indicated greater confidence in Korean. This result is understandable given their longer exposure to English throughout their education, in contrast to the relatively recent introduction to Korean.
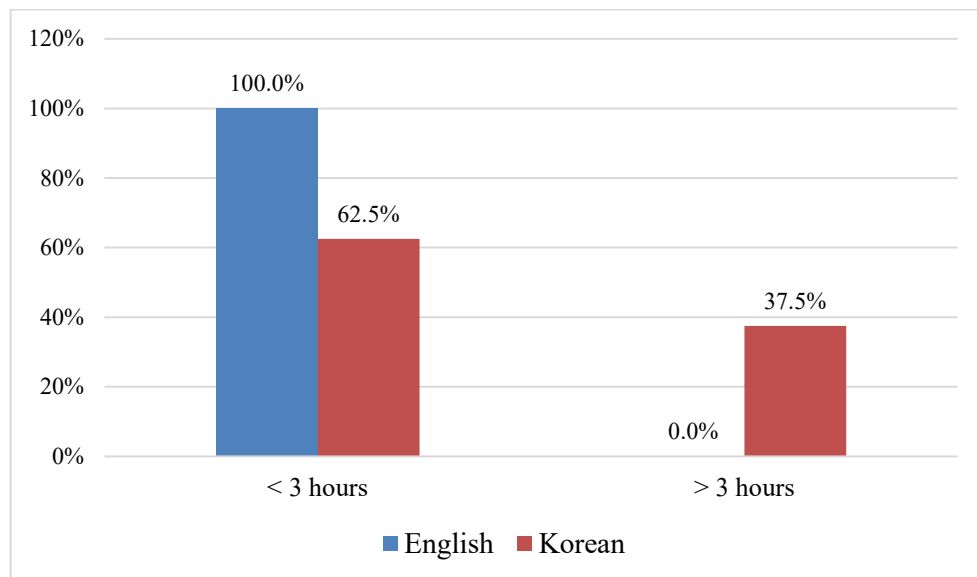

Chart 3: Students' hours per week in learning speaking

Regarding study time, all participants (100%) reported spending fewer than three hours per week studying English outside of class. For Korean, 62.5% of students similarly reported studying fewer than three hours per week, while 37.5% dedicated more than three hours weekly. This pattern suggests limited outside-of-class engagement in both languages, with slightly more effort being made for Korean due to its novelty and associated learning challenges.

A striking finding was that none of the students studied English and Korean on the same day. This separation may stem from cognitive fatigue concerns or attempts to avoid cross-linguistic interference. However, it also indicates missed opportunities for integrated bilingual practice, which could otherwise facilitate stronger language transfer and comparison skills.

Overall, students' perceptions reveal a strong awareness of the importance of speaking, tempered by limited study time and emerging confidence levels.

2.3.3. Main speaking difficulties

Participants identified a variety of speaking challenges across both English and Korean, reflecting both linguistic and affective barriers to fluency.
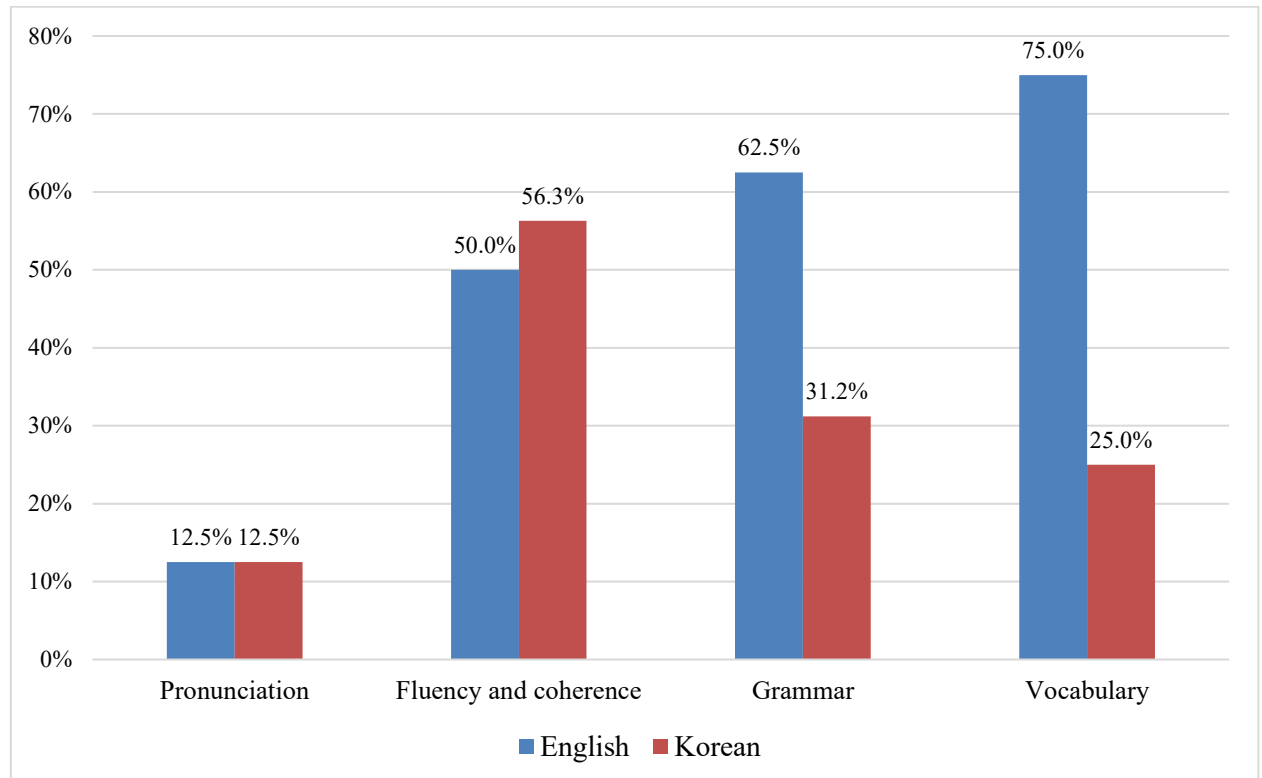

Chart 4: Students' difficluties in learning speaking English and Korean

In terms of specific language difficulties, vocabulary emerged as the most prominent issue for English, with 75% of students (12 out of 16) identifying it as their main struggle, followed by grammar, at 62.5%, fluency and coherence , at 50%, and pronunciation, accounting for 12.5%. In Korean, fluency and coherence were the primary difficulties for 56.3% of students (9 students), while grammar was a concern for 31.2% (5 students). Pronunciation and vocabulary were relatively less problematic in Korean compared to English, possibly because students were still at an early stage of Korean language acquisition where sentence-level fluency posed a greater immediate barrier than individual word or sound mastery.

Table 1: Students' difficulties in learning speaking two foreign languages

Difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
I often confuse vocabulary between the two languages.	12.5%	18.8%	37.5%	18.8%	12.5%
I sometimes mix grammar rules from one language with the other.	12.5%	25%	18.8%	31.3%	12.5%
It takes me longer to form sentences when I try to speak.	0%	0%	25%	43.8%	31.3%
I feel nervous or less confident when speaking either language.	6.3%	18.8%	25%	37.5%	12.5%
I have difficulty pronouncing words correctly in both languages.	12.5%	43.8%	31.3%	12.5%	0%
I forget how to say words I already know in one language because of interference from the other.	6.3%	25%	12.5%	50%	6.3%
Switching between the two languages while speaking is challenging for me.	0%	18.8%	12.5%	62.5%	6.3%
I do not have enough time to practice speaking in two languages.	0%	12.5%	12.5%	50%	25%
I have little time to speak in group work.	18.8%	37.5%	12.5%	18.8%	12.5%
I feel demotivated by the way my teacher conducts speaking lessons.	12.5%	50%	12.5%	18.8%	6.3%
I receive little feedback on my speaking performance.	25%	37.5%	25%	12.5%	0%
Unpleasant learning environment makes me reluctant to speak.	37.5%	25%	18.8%	12.5%	6.3%

(1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly agree)

The results of the survey provide insight into the key challenges faced by first-year English–Korean majors in speaking two foreign languages. Based on students' responses to the Likert-scale statements, the areas of difficulty can be grouped according to their perceived severity.

The most prominent difficulties identified were related to fluency and time constraints. A significant 75% of students agreed or strongly agreed that it takes them longer to form sentences when speaking. This finding suggests that students struggle with organizing their thoughts quickly in real-time communication, which is a core component of speaking fluency. Similarly, 75% also reported not having enough time to practice speaking in both languages, indicating that limited exposure is a critical barrier to improving oral skills. In addition, 68.8% of students found it difficult to switch between English and Korean during speech, which reflects the cognitive strain of managing two language systems simultaneously.

Several other difficulties were also commonly reported, though to a slightly lesser extent. Half of the students (50%) indicated that they often confuse vocabulary between English and Korean, while 43.8% admitted to mixing grammar rules from one language with the other. Another 50% said they forget how to say words they already know because of interference, demonstrating that lexical confusion is a persistent challenge.

Other areas were perceived as less problematic. For instance, only 25% of students expressed dissatisfaction with the way teachers conducted speaking lessons, and a similar percentage believed they had little time to speak during group work. Notably, only 12.5% strongly agreed that they had difficulty pronouncing words correctly in both languages, and just 18.8% felt demotivated due to an unpleasant classroom environment.

In conclusion, the data indicate that the serious barriers to speaking development among the participants include grammar, fluency, confidence, switching, time and feed back.

2.3.4. Preferred learning strategies and teacher support

The survey explored students' preferences regarding learning strategies and the types of teacher support they believed would enhance their speaking skills in both English and Korean. The responses reflected a clear desire for engaging, technology-supported, and psychologically safe learning environments.
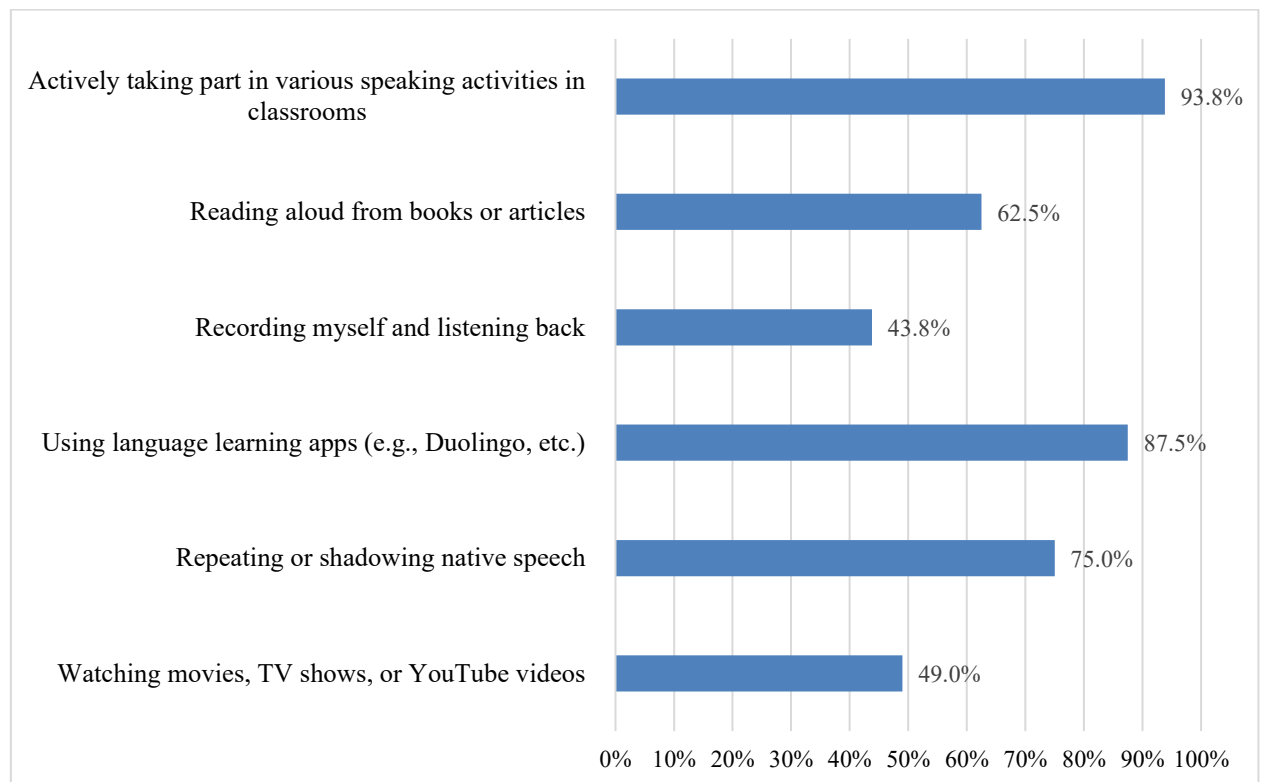

Chart 5: Students' suggestions to improve speaking skill

It is clear that the most commonly chosen option was the various activities designed by teachers, accounting for about 94%, followed by use of language learning apps such as Duolingo, Cake, etc. at 87.5% indicating a demand for more authentic and engaging input. Repeating and shadowing native speech and reading aloud were 75% and 62.5% respectively. The remaining ones accounted for a bit more than 40%. Thus, these findings underscore the need for student-centered, interactive, and emotionally supportive teaching strategies that integrate both technology and real-life practice.
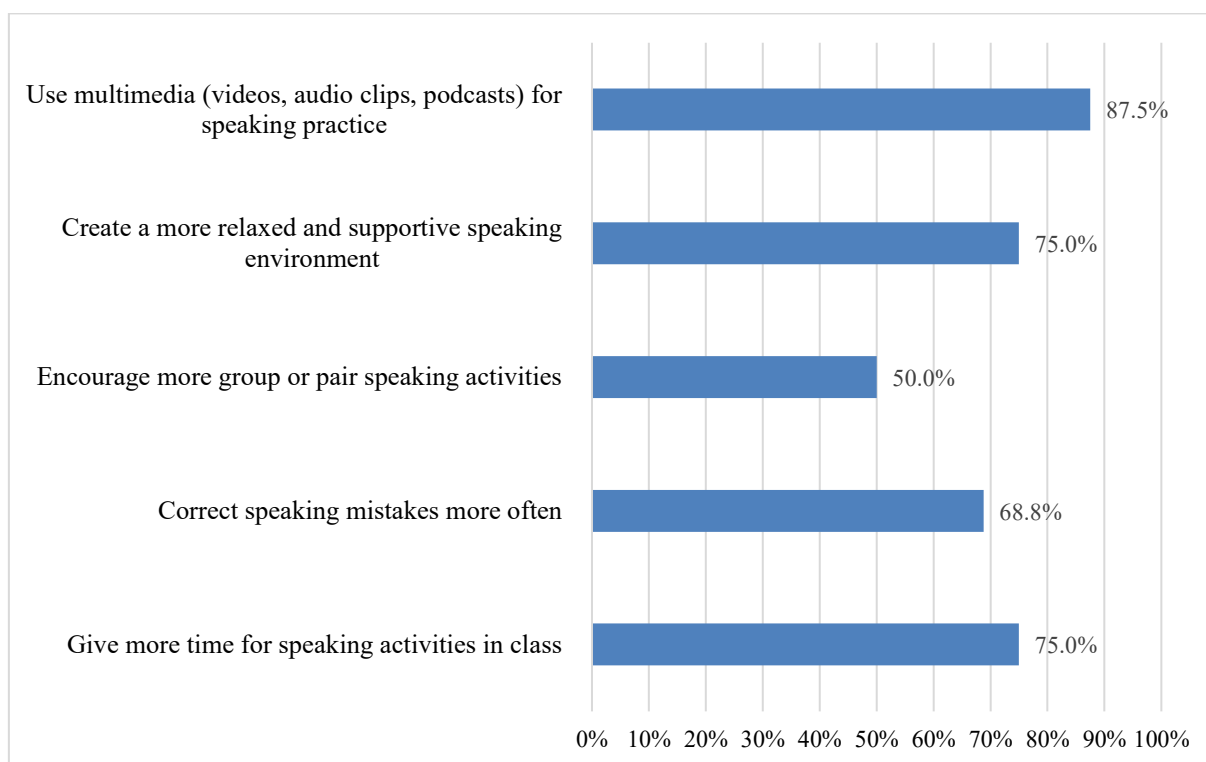
Chart 6: Students' preferences for teacher support in speaking lessons

According to the survey results on students' preferences for teacher support in speaking lessons, the majority of students (87.5%) expressed a desire for teachers to use multimedia resources such as videos, audio clips, or podcasts for speaking practice, indicating a strong interest in engaging and realistic learning materials. Additionally, 75% of students wished for more time to be allocated to speaking activities in class and also emphasized the importance of a more relaxed and supportive classroom environment. Around 68.8% of students wanted their speaking mistakes to be corrected more often to improve their pronunciation and boost their confidence. Meanwhile, only 50% of students showed interest in having more group or pair speaking activities. These results suggest that students highly value a variety of teaching methods, while also needing a positive learning atmosphere and clear guidance from teachers to enhance their speaking skills.

2.3.5. Discussion and relation to previous studies

The findings from the survey conducted among 16 first-year English– Korean majored students at HPU reveal several prominent difficulties in speaking, categorized into five major areas: linguistic challenges, psychological factors, learning behaviors, environmental influences, and preferred methods of speaking improvement.

In terms of linguistic aspects, fluency and grammar are students' problems. While fluency merged as the most problematic aspect, with 75.1% of students reporting it as a major difficulty, grammar is less challenging.

Regarding psychological factors, the most commonly reported issues were lack of confidence. The psychological barrier significantly affect students' willingness to participate and perform in speaking tasks. This implies that while students are generally eager to improve, their emotional state still limits their performance.

In terms of learning behaviors, most students reported spending relatively little time practicing speaking skills. The majority practiced less than three hours per week, and very few engaged in speaking both English and Korean on the same day. Instead, they tended to alternate between the two languages on different days, which may reduce the effectiveness of cross-language practice. Additionally, interference and switching between two foreign languages are their big obstacles.

The findings also reveal that environmental influence on learners' speaking is positive, most of the students feel motivated, so learning environment is not a language barrier. In addition, feedback from teachers and friends have good impact on learning speaking of the participants.

Finally, when asked about their preferred methods of speaking improvement, students showed a strong inclination toward modern, interactive learning tools. The majority favored using language learning applications such as Duolingo and Cake to support vocabulary and pronunciation practice.

Various activities such as pair work, role-play, and presentations were also highly appreciated for their ability to foster communication and reduce anxiety. Furthermore, many students expressed that teacher support - through encouragement and constructive feedback - was essential to their confidence and progress in speaking. These preferences highlight students' openness to diverse learning strategies and underscore the importance of a supportive, interactive learning environment.

* Comparison with previous studies:

The results of this study align with and, in some aspects, expand upon the findings of previous research concerning speaking difficulties in foreign language learning. Consistent with Tuan and Mai (2015), who identified hesitation, fluency and grammatical errors as common problems among Vietnamese EFL learners, the current study also found fluency and vocabulary to be the most prominent difficulties among students.

Regarding psychological factors, the current study reinforces Horwitz et al. (1986) theory of language anxiety. Similar emotional challenges were also highlighted in Leong and Ahmadi's (2017) research, which indicated that psychological barriers can significantly hinder students' oral performance regardless of their linguistic competence.

In terms of learning behaviors, the study revealed that students did not regularly practice both English and Korean on the same day and generally spent limited time on speaking practice. This finding is noteworthy in relation to Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory, as the need to manage two linguistic systems may lead students to compartmentalize their learning and avoid cross-language interference. Previous studies have rarely addressed this specific behavioral pattern in bilingual language learning, making this study a valuable contribution to understanding time management and strategy use among dual-language learners.

Interestingly, environmental factors, such as teaching style and classroom atmosphere, were not considered major barriers by most participants in this study. This finding contrasts with earlier works such as Harmer (2007) and Ur (1996), which emphasized the significant role of classroom environment in either facilitating or obstructing oral skill development. The students in this research generally perceived their environment as supportive one.

Finally, with respect to preferred methods of improvement, the students' strong preference for technology-enhanced learning and teacher guidance supports Nation and Newton's (2009) emphasis on meaning-focused output and communicative practice. The popularity of apps, multimedia input, and interactive speaking tasks reflects a shift toward learner autonomy and the integration of digital tools in modern language learning contexts.

In summary, the current study confirms several well-established findings related to speaking difficulties in foreign language learning, while also introducing new perspectives related to bilingual learning behaviors, perceived importance of fluency, and evolving preferences for digital learning tools. These insights are particularly valuable in the context of bilingual programs, where cognitive, emotional, and instructional challenges intersect in unique ways.

CHAPTER 4: SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

2.4.1. Solutions for students

Language learners play a crucial role in their own success. While external factors such as teaching methods and curriculum design are undeniably important, the learner's own initiative, consistency, and attitude toward speaking practice significantly influence progress. For first-year English-Korean majors at HPU, who are expected to develop oral proficiency in two linguistically distinct languages, taking ownership of one's learning becomes even more essential. The following strategies are suggested to help students overcome common difficulties and actively build their speaking competence.

2.4.1.1 Building vocabulary and grammar knowledge

Students are encouraged to adopt daily vocabulary-building practices such as using flashcards, mobile applications (like Duolingo or Anki), or keeping a personal word journal with sample sentences in both languages. For grammar, students should focus on short, spoken drills using basic structures in context rather than solely relying on written exercises.

2.4.1.2. Increasing active speaking time

Students should increase their active speaking time by integrating short speaking activities into their daily routines. For example, they can record short monologues, join speaking groups, or summarize their day in both languages. Fluency is built through frequent, meaningful output. Daily micro-practices like voice journaling or peer conversations help students gradually improve without overwhelming pressure.

2.4.1.3. Using language apps and multimedia

Use speaking practice apps such as HelloTalk and Tandem, even AI to help students connect with native speakers or virtual people, while platforms like YouTube and Netflix provide culturally rich materials. By repeating or shadowing native speakers, learners develop better rhythm, pronunciation, and intonation.

2.4.1.4. Managing anxiety and building confidence

To reduce speaking anxiety, students can begin by practicing alone through voice recordings or role-plays, gradually progressing to small group discussions. Keeping a private speaking diary helps track progress and reduce fear of judgment. Additionally, students should learn to normalize mistakes as part of learning and focus on progress, not perfection.

2.4.1.5. Developing speaking journals

One highly effective, yet often overlooked, method for improving speaking is the use of oral journals or speaking diaries. This involves students regularly recording themselves speaking about specific topics, personal reflections, or course-related material. These recordings can then be reviewed weekly or monthly to track progress in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. For example, a student might record a 3-minute reflection every Friday summarizing what they learned in their Korean class that week. Another may describe their weekend in English, focusing on using new vocabulary from recent lessons. Over time, students can re-listen to earlier recordings to observe their development in clarity, speed, and accuracy.

In addition, these journals can be shared with instructors for personalized feedback, making them a valuable tool for self-assessment and teacher guidance. In fact, reflective oral practice promotes metacognitive awareness and accelerates spoken language acquisition by reinforcing output-based learning.

2.4.2. For teachers

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the speaking competence of students, especially in the early stages of language development. The results of the survey reveal that students expect their instructors to provide more support in both instructional methods and classroom atmosphere. In particular, they expressed the need for increased speaking time, more constructive feedback, and the integration of multimedia resources. Therefore, the following solutions are

proposed to enhance the effectiveness of teaching speaking skills among English–Korean majored students at HPU.

2.4.2.1. Allocating more time for speaking practice in class

One of the most effective ways to address students' difficulties in speaking is to increase the amount of class time specifically devoted to speaking practice. Teachers can implement communicative activities such as pair work, role-plays, debates, and information gap tasks to create more authentic speaking opportunities. These activities not only allow students to actively use the target language but also help reduce speaking anxiety by promoting peer collaboration in a low-stakes environment . Furthermore, teachers should also consider integrating speaking tasks that are aligned with students' interests and real-life situations to enhance engagement.

2.4.2.2. Providing timely and constructive feedback

Feedback should be balanced – corrective, it should be combined with clear error correction, which fostering learners' motivation and reducing the fear of speaking. Teachers should avoid interrupting students mid-speech and instead provide comments after the task, either orally or in written form.

Peer correction, which was regarded as speaking in group work, can be used in combination with teacher support. When students evaluate each other's performance in a structured format, they develop greater metacognitive awareness and become more engaged in the learning process.

2.4.2.3. Creating a supportive and low-anxiety classroom environment

Teachers should adopt classroom management techniques that lower the affective filter: encouraging participation without penalizing errors, using humor appropriately, and praising effort rather than fluency alone.

Small-group discussions or anonymous speaking tools (e.g., audio submissions) can also reduce performance pressure while still providing valuable speaking practice.

Teachers are suggested to provide various interesting activities, making pleasant atmostphere on the classroom.

2.4.2.4. Integrating multimedia into speaking instruction

The use of audio-visual input to enrich students' exposure to natural speech models, especially in low-input environments .Thus, teachers can design pre-viewing and post-viewing speaking tasks such as summarizing video content, discussing opinions, or role-playing situations from the media. These tasks not only improve speaking fluency but also connect language learning with real-world communication.

2.4.2.5. Encouraging collaborative speaking activities

Teachers can design collaborative tasks such as:

- Think-Pair-Share exercises (students first think individually, then discuss in pairs before sharing with the class)

- Peer teaching sessions (where students explain concepts to each other to reinforce understanding),

- Rotating discussion circles (small groups rotate roles to practice varied conversational topics and dynamics)

- Group storytelling games (each student adds a sentence, promoting creativity and turn-taking in speaking)

Moreover, assigning speaking tasks that require interdependence, such as solving a puzzle or completing a role-play with hidden information, ensures that all learners contribute equally, regardless of their proficiency level.

2.4.3 Solutions for HPU's language program

While learners and teachers play essential roles in developing speaking competence, institutional support is the backbone of any successful language program. At Hai Phong University of Management and Technology, the current curriculum and learning environment must evolve to meet the specific needs of students majoring in both English and Korean. Institutional strategies should aim to provide consistent practice, access to authentic interaction, and

infrastructure that fosters oral language development. The following proposals address both curricular and extracurricular dimensions of improvement.

2.4.3.1. Adjusting the curriculum to prioritize speaking

Despite the growing awareness of communicative competence in language education, many university-level courses still prioritize reading, grammar, and translation exercises - often at the expense of oral expression.

One of the most recurrent concerns from the survey was the insufficient emphasis on speaking practice in the formal curriculum. Although students engaged in classroom speaking activities, they still felt they lacked adequate time and structured opportunities to develop oral fluency. Therefore, HPU's language program should consider increasing the weight of speaking in the curriculum. This could include:

- Introducing specific speaking-focused courses from the first year

- Integrating formative speaking tasks (e.g., presentations, interviews, impromptu talks) into existing modules.

- Designing summative assessments that include oral components alongside traditional written exams.

2.4.3.2. Providing access to authentic multimedia materials

A significant number of students expressed their desire for more multimedia resources, such as videos, podcasts, and native speaker models, to aid their speaking development. Incorporating authentic materials into coursework not only exposes learners to natural pronunciation and intonation but also promotes cultural awareness and engagement. For example, Korean dramas, English talk shows, or YouTube clips can be used as prompts for class discussions or listening-speaking tasks.

2.4.3.3. Supporting extracurricular and informal learning spaces

Speaking practice should not be confined to formal classroom environments. To facilitate continuous and comfortable oral language development, HPU should invest in extracurricular infrastructure that supports

informal practice. This includes setting up language lounges or self-access centers equipped with speaking prompts, voice recorders, and digital learning tools. These spaces could be designed for students to engage in casual discussions, rehearse presentations, or participate in language-themed activities with their peers.

The university might also support weekly English–Korean speaking clubs with student-led topics and interactive games. The key is to create a space where students feel safe to experiment with language, make mistakes, and express themselves without the fear of grades or correction. These environments, when supported by faculty and the program, can foster greater autonomy and confidence in students' speaking habits.

PART III: CONCLUSION

3.1. Summary of key findings

This study explored the speaking difficulties experienced by first-year students majoring in English–Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. The results revealed a combination of several speaking difficulties. Linguistically, students struggled most with fluency and grammar. Psychologically, low confidence limited their willingness to speak. In terms of learning behavior, students practiced speaking infrequently, often less than three hours per week, and rarely used both languages on the same day, leading to interference and switching issues. Despite a supportive environment, these internal and behavioral challenges significantly affected their speaking performance.

3.2. Limitations of the study

This research, while informative, has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small - only 16 first-year students majoring in English–Korean at Hai Phong University of Management and Technologies. Such a limited sample restricts the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of EFL learners, especially those from different academic backgrounds, regions, or levels of proficiency. Future studies with larger and more diverse samples would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the speaking difficulties among students.

Secondly, due to time constraints, the study primarily relied on a self-reported questionnaire to gather students' perceptions regarding their speaking challenges and preferences. This method is useful for capturing learners' subjective experiences.

3.3. Recommendations for future research

Future studies should explore longitudinal data to track how speaking proficiency evolves across semesters and how students respond to different types of instructional interventions.

Studies comparing bilingual (English-Korean) learners at different levels, can reveal how institutional resources and teaching cultures affect speaking outcomes. Investigating how technology-enhanced learning tools can support speaking practice would also be a valuable area of inquiry.

In conclusion, this study highlights the multifaceted challenges that students face in speaking both English and Korean, and emphasizes the need for more learner-centered, practice-oriented, and psychologically supportive approaches in language education. By addressing the linguistic, emotional, and environmental barriers simultaneously, students can be better equipped to communicate confidently and effectively in multiple languages.

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SURVEY QUESTIONAIRE (for students)

This survey questionnaire is designed for the research titled "Difficulties encountered by first-year English - Korean majored students in learning speaking at HPU and some suggested solutions." Your assistance in responding to the following items is highly valued. All information provided will be used exclusively for academic research purposes.

Thank you sincerely for your valuable contribution to this study.

Please mark with a check (✓) or number the boxes or write the answer where necessary.

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Your gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female

2. Your age: …………

3. How long have you been learning English:….year (s) and Korean ……..(years)

II. YOUR OPINION ON LEARNING ENGLISH AND KOREAN

4. What do you think of the importance of speaking two foreign languages?

☐ Very important   ☐ Important   ☐ Not important

5. Which language do you feel more confident speaking?

☐ English   ☐ Korean

6. How many hours per week do you spend learning each language?

English :………..hour(s)   Korean:………..hours(s)

7. Do you study both languages on the same day?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

8. Which aspects of speaking do you struggle with the most in each language?

Difficulties	English	Korean
Pronunciation		
Fluency and coherence		

Grammar		
Vocabulary		

9. What are your difficulties in speaking foreign languages? *(1- Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly agree)*

Difficulties	1	2	3	4	5
I often confuse vocabulary between the two languages.					
I sometimes mix grammar rules from one language with the other.					
It takes me longer to form sentences when I try to speak.					
I feel nervous or less confident when speaking either language.					
I have difficulty pronouncing words correctly in both languages.					
I forget how to say words I already know in one language because of interference from the other.					
Switching between the two languages while speaking is challenging for me.					
I do not have enough time to practice speaking in two languages					
I have little time to speak in group work					
I feel demotivated by the way my teacher conducts speaking lessons.					
I receive little feedback on my speaking performance.					
Unpleasant learning environment makes me reluctant to speak					

10. Which of the following will help you improve your speaking skills in both languages?

□ Watching movies, TV shows, or YouTube videos

□ Repeating or shadowing native speech

□ Using language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, etc.)

□ Recording myself and listening back

□ Reading aloud from books or articles

□ Activel taking part in various speaking activities in classrooms

□ Others (please specify): _____

11. What would you like your teachers to do to improve your speaking skills?

□ Give more time for speaking activities in class

□ Correct my speaking mistakes more often

□ Encourage more group or pair speaking activities

□ Create a more relaxed and supportive speaking environment

□ Use multimedia (videos, audio clips, podcasts) for speaking practice

□ Others (please specify): _____

Thank you very much!