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 : Lê Thị Phương Lan

HẢI PHÒNG – 2025

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

A STUDY ON DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AMONG FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT HAI PHONG UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP ĐẠI HỌC HỆ CHÍNH QUY
NGÀNH : NGÔN NGỮ ANH

Sinh viên : Lê Thị Phương Lan
Giảng viên hướng dẫn : ThS. Nguyễn Thị Phương Thu

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TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC QUẢN LÝ VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ HẢI PHÒNG

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Tên đề tài: A study on difficulties in learning English pronunciation among first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology and some suggested solutions

NHIỆM VỤ ĐỀ TÀI

1. **Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp**

   - Tổng quan lý luận và thực trạng

   - Phân tích nguyên nhân khó khăn

   - Thiết kế và triển khai nghiên cứu

   - Đề xuất giải pháp thực tiễn

   - Yêu cầu về phạm vi, thời gian và trình bày

2. **Các tài liệu, số liệu cần thiết**

   * Tài liệu:

   - Chuyên khảo & nghiên cứu

   + Teaching Pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010)

   + Flege (1995) & Saito & Lyster (2012) về L1 transfer và form-focused instruction

   - Công cụ thu thập

   + Phiếu khảo sát song ngữ (tự đánh giá, tần suất, khó khăn)

   + Bộ câu hỏi phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc (âm khó, tâm lý, công cụ hỗ trợ)

   * Số liệu:

   - Định lượng

   + 30 sinh viên năm nhất Anh ngữ HPU

   + Tần suất luyện phát âm (buổi/tuần) & điểm tự đánh giá (Likert 1–5)

   - Định tính

   + phỏng vấn sâu 6 sinh viên, ghi âm & transcript

   + Mã hóa chủ đề: L1 transfer, rào cản tâm lý, môi trường học tập

3. **Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp**

   - Công ty TNHH Xây dựng nhân lực St. John Paul II

CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên   : Nguyễn Thị Phương Thu

Học hàm, học vị   : Thạc Sĩ

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

Nội dung hướng dẫn: A study on difficulties in learning English pronunciation among first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology 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*

Lê Thị Phương Lan   ThS. Nguyễn Thị Phương Thu

Hải Phòng, ngày ... tháng ... năm 2025
XÁC NHẬN CỦA KHOA

PHIẾU NHẬN XÉT CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN HƯỚNG DẪN TỐT NGHIỆP

Họ và tên giảng viên: Nguyễn Thị Phương Thu
Đơn vị công tác: Trường Đại Học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng
Họ và tên sinh viên: Lê Thị Phương Lan
  Chuyên ngành: Tiếng Anh Thương Mại
Nội dung hướng dẫn: A study on difficulties in learning English pronunciation among first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology and some suggested solutions

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
(Ký và ghi rõ họ tên)

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: Lê Thị Phương Lan

Chuyên ngành: Tiếng Anh Thương Mại

Đề tài tốt nghiệp: A study on difficulties in learning English pronunciation among first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology 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

(Ký và ghi rõ tên)

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the difficulties that first-year English major students at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology have when learning English pronunciation. Good pronunciation is important for clear communication, but many students find it hard to learn.

The purpose of this study is to find out what problems students often face, why these problems happen, and how to help students improve their pronunciation. To collect information, a survey was given to first-year English majors. The results show that students struggle with difficult English sounds, word stress, intonation, and linking sounds. Many students also feel shy or nervous when speaking English. Their mother tongue and the lack of chances to practice with native speakers also affect their pronunciation.

From these results, the study gives some useful suggestions for both students and teachers. These include using mobile apps, getting feedback from teachers, and having more chances to speak English in class.

This research hopes to help improve the way English pronunciation is taught and learned at the university.

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Hai Phong, May 2025
Student

Lê Thị Phương Lan

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PART I : INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

English is a global language vital for study, work, travel, and cultural exchange. In Vietnam, it is taught at all levels—from primary school to university. However, many learners concentrate on grammar, reading, writing, and listening while overlooking pronunciation. Clear pronunciation is crucial not only for speaking but also for understanding native speakers and performing well on exams such as IELTS, TOEIC, and PTE Academic.

At Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU), first-year English majors face notable pronunciation challenges. Most students learn new words by meaning, without consulting phonetic symbols or pronunciation rules. Consequently, they frequently mispronounce vowel and consonant sounds, apply incorrect word stress, and speak at an uncontrolled pace. Limited use of effective pronunciation strategies in class leaves students hesitant and lacking confidence.

This study aims to identify the key pronunciation difficulties of HPU's first-year students and to propose simple, practical solutions. By examining methods such as phonetic training, structured practice, and targeted feedback, the research seeks to help students build reliable pronunciation habits, improve their spoken English, and gain confidence in both academic and everyday communication.

2. Objectives of the study

This study is conducted with three primary objectives that collectively aim to enhance the pronunciation competence of first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology and to contribute to more effective English language teaching and learning practices.

Firstly, the study seeks to identify the most common pronunciation difficulties faced by these students. These may include segmental issues, such as the mispronunciation of individual consonants and vowels, as well as suprasegmental features, including stress placement, intonation patterns, and connected speech.

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Recognizing these recurring challenges is a crucial step in understanding the specific areas that require pedagogical attention.

Secondly, the research aims to analyze the underlying causes of these difficulties in order to gain deeper insights into the factors that hinder students' pronunciation development. These factors may range from linguistic influences, such as negative transfer from the mother tongue, to extralinguistic variables, including insufficient practice opportunities, lack of exposure to authentic English input, ineffective learning strategies, and psychological barriers such as anxiety, self-consciousness, or low motivation. By uncovering these causes, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context in which pronunciation learning occurs.

Thirdly, based on the findings from the first two objectives, the study will propose practical, research-informed solutions designed to support students in overcoming these challenges. These solutions will include the implementation of effective pronunciation learning strategies, such as the use of phonetic transcription to build sound-symbol awareness, structured pronunciation drills to enhance muscle memory, targeted teacher feedback for immediate correction and reinforcement, and increased access to natural language input through multimedia or communicative activities.

Ultimately, the overarching goal of this study is to offer practical pedagogical recommendations that can be readily applied by both students and educators. By integrating pronunciation instruction more deliberately into daily language lessons, learners are expected to achieve clearer, more intelligible speech and develop greater confidence in both academic and real-life communication settings.

3. Scope of the study

This research examines first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology in the 2024–2025 academic year. It focuses on key pronunciation features—vowels, consonants, word stress, intonation, and

connected speech—and evaluates practical learning strategies such as phonetic symbol practice, guided drills, mobile apps, and feedback sessions. Given time and resources, the study does not cover every technique or other student groups. Instead, it offers a concise, evidence-based guide that students and teachers can apply immediately. While the results may not apply to all contexts, they provide clear recommendations to help first-year majors improve their pronunciation and gain confidence in speaking English.

4. Methods of the study

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand pronunciation challenges faced by first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology.

Data Collection: A bilingual questionnaire (Vietnamese–English) asked about students' pronunciation awareness, learning habits, strategies, and difficulties. It included closed-ended questions for numerical data and open-ended prompts for detailed responses. After the survey, six students volunteered for semi-structured interviews to share deeper insights into their pronunciation experiences.

Data Analysis: Quantitative responses were analyzed in Excel to find frequencies and percentages, highlighting common practice habits and difficulty areas. Qualitative data from open questions and interviews were examined through thematic analysis. Open coding revealed key themes like speaking anxiety, limited practice opportunities, and dependence on Vietnamese spelling. This combined approach generates clear, trustworthy insights into students' pronunciation needs.

5. Design of the study

This thesis is structured to investigate and resolve pronunciation challenges among first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology. It includes:

Introduction: Presents the study's rationale, aims, scope, and methods.

Chapter I – Theoretical Background: Reviews key theories on second-language pronunciation and teaching methods.

Chapter II – Research Methodology: Explains the mixed-methods design, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Chapter III – Findings and Discussion: Reports survey and interview results, identifying main pronunciation problems and their causes.

Chapter IV – Suggested Solutions: Offers practical strategies—such as phonetic training, guided drills, and feedback—to improve student pronunciation.

The thesis ends with a conclusion summarizing the findings, implications, and suggestions for further research. All references are formatted in APA style.

PART II : DEVELOPMENT
CHAPTER 1 : THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Definition of pronunciation

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of spoken language, referring to the way in which sounds are physically produced, heard, and interpreted in oral communication. It involves not only the articulation of individual speech sounds, but also the use of prosodic features that govern how these sounds are organized and perceived in connected speech. In essence, pronunciation is the interface between the phonological system of a language and its actual use in speech.

According to Beebe and Uliss-Weltz (1999), pronunciation can be divided into two main categories: segmental features and suprasegmental features. Segmental features refer to discrete phonemes—namely consonants and vowels—that form the basic building blocks of words. Accurate segmental articulation is essential for ensuring word-level intelligibility. For instance, confusion between minimal pairs such as /l/ and /r/ ("light" vs. "right") or /s/ and /ʃ/ ("sip" vs. "ship") can severely impair comprehension. Suprasegmental features encompass broader speech patterns, including word stress, sentence stress, intonation, rhythm, and connected speech. These elements contribute to the natural flow, expressiveness, and meaning of speech. Proper use of suprasegmentals helps listeners distinguish between sentence types (e.g., questions vs. statements), interpret speaker intent, and follow conversational cues.

From a linguistic perspective, pronunciation operates on both perceptual and productive levels. Learners must not only produce speech sounds accurately but also be able to perceive subtle distinctions in spoken input. This dual aspect makes pronunciation a complex skill, often requiring focused attention and deliberate practice, unlike more passive skills such as reading or listening.

While some may view pronunciation as a secondary or "natural" outcome of language acquisition, numerous studies have challenged this assumption. Munro and Derwing (2011) emphasize that, without explicit and sustained instruction,

many learners continue to exhibit fossilized errors—particularly in suprasegmental areas such as intonation and stress—well into the advanced stages of learning. Such persistent inaccuracies can hinder intelligibility and lead to breakdowns in communication, even when a speaker's grammar and vocabulary are otherwise strong.

In the Vietnamese EFL context, native phonological habits, such as the use of tones in Vietnamese, often interfere with the acquisition of English prosodic features (Nguyen, 2018). For example, learners may apply equal stress to all syllables or fail to use rising and falling intonation patterns appropriately, resulting in speech that sounds flat, mechanical, or confusing to native listeners.

Therefore, defining pronunciation as a combination of segmental and suprasegmental elements offers a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by learners. This definition not only provides a basis for identifying specific areas of difficulty but also serves as a foundation for designing effective teaching methods that can improve learners' overall communicative competence.

1.2 Roles of first language in learning English pronunciation

A learner's first language (L1) strongly shapes how they perceive and produce English sounds. This influence appears in two key ways:

- Perception Transfer: Learners hear English through the filter of their native sound categories. If an English sound is absent in Vietnamese—such as the distinction between /l/ and /r/—students often substitute the closest L1 sound (Pham, 2017). This mishearing leads to repeated listening and speaking errors, making comprehension and clear communication harder.

- Production Transfer: Learners bring their habitual speech patterns into English. Vietnamese is a syllable-timed, tonal language, while English is stress-timed and non-tonal. As a result, students may apply even stress across syllables and use Vietnamese pitch patterns, producing flat or irregular English stress and intonation (Tran & Le, 2019).

Studies show that drawing learners' attention to these contrasts can reduce L1 interference. For instance, Flege (1995) found that training learners to distinguish L1–L2 sound pairs improved their ability to notice and produce new English sounds. Likewise, Saito and Lyster (2012) reported that minimal-pair drills and stress-timing exercises led to significant gains in pronunciation accuracy and listener comprehension.

By understanding L1 transfer, teachers can target precise pronunciation problems—such as vowel length, consonant clusters, and stress patterns—using focused drills and comparison exercises. This approach builds learners' awareness of English sound patterns and supports clearer, more natural speech.

1.3 Components of English pronunciation

English pronunciation is composed of two essential elements: Segmental and Suprasegmental features. Both are crucial for speech intelligibility and effective communication.

- Segmental features: involve the production of individual vowel and consonant sounds. Learners need to recognize and produce these sounds accurately to avoid miscommunication. For instance, confusing /θ/ and /s/ may result in changing "think" to "sink", which alters the meaning entirely. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) highlight that segmental errors can significantly impact word-level clarity, particularly for listeners unfamiliar with the speaker's accent or speech patterns.

- Suprasegmental features: go beyond individual sounds and include word stress, sentence rhythm, intonation, and connected speech. These features shape how speech is organized and understood at the phrase or sentence level. Proper stress, for example, distinguishes between words like 'record (noun) and re'cord (verb). Intonation conveys speaker emotion, attitude, and intent. Rhythm and connected speech—through linking, assimilation, and elision—help create the natural flow characteristic of fluent English speech. According to Derwing and Munro (2015), learners with better control of suprasegmental features are often more intelligible than those who focus only on segmentals.

While some learners concentrate mainly on individual sounds, evidence shows that improving suprasegmentals has a greater impact on overall comprehensibility. Hahn (2004) found that correct sentence stress patterns significantly improve listener understanding, even when segmental pronunciation is imperfect.

For Vietnamese learners, suprasegmental features pose particular challenges due to differences in stress and rhythm between English and Vietnamese. Vietnamese is a tonal and syllable-timed language, which contrasts with English's stress-timed rhythm. This difference often causes learners to apply equal stress across syllables or misplace intonation, making speech sound unnatural or difficult to follow.

Therefore, a balanced approach to pronunciation instruction is essential. Teachers should address both segmentals and suprasegmentals, with extra emphasis on suprasegmentals for learners whose first language differs significantly in rhythm and stress patterns. This approach not only improves accuracy but also builds learner confidence and fluency in real-world communication.

1.4 Common difficulties in pronunciation for Vietnamese learners

Vietnamese learners of English face distinct pronunciation challenges due to structural differences between the two languages. These difficulties mainly involve segmental issues, suprasegmental features, and first language (L1) transfer.

- Segmental difficulties:

English contains many sounds that do not exist in Vietnamese, leading to frequent substitution or omission. For example, the English dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ (as in "think" and "this") are often replaced by /t/ or /d/ because Vietnamese lacks these sounds (Nguyen & Macken, 2008). Additionally, final consonant clusters—common in English words like "missed" or "helped"—are rare in Vietnamese. As a result, learners often delete final consonants, reducing speech clarity. Another

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major issue is vowel distinction. Vietnamese has a more limited vowel inventory, so learners often confuse sounds like /ɪ/ and /iː/ ("ship" vs. "sheep"), affecting both comprehension and intelligibility.

- Suprasegmental difficulties:

Vietnamese is a "tonal" and "syllable-timed" language, where each syllable tends to have equal timing and tonal variation carries meaning. In contrast, English is "stress-timed", with stressed syllables occurring at regular intervals and rhythm shaping sentence meaning. Vietnamese learners often struggle to produce natural English stress and rhythm, leading to flat, robotic speech. For instance, saying "I want to go home" with equal stress on every word sounds unnatural and can confuse native listeners. Furthermore, features of connected speech—such as linking, assimilation, and elision—are underused, making learners' speech sound hesitant and overly segmented (Tran, 2020).

- First language transfer:

Pronunciation errors often stem from unconscious transfer of Vietnamese phonological rules into English. For example, Vietnamese words rarely end with voiced consonants, so learners often devoice final sounds, pronouncing "bad" as "bat". Additionally, the reliance on tone to express meaning in Vietnamese can lead to unnatural intonation patterns when speaking English, where stress and pitch—not tone—convey emotion and emphasis (Nguyen, 2018). Without explicit instruction, these negative transfers can become deeply ingrained.

- Fossilization and psychological barriers:

If pronunciation errors are not corrected early, they tend to fossilize, becoming permanent features of the learner's speech. Derwing and Munro (2015) emphasize that learners who receive little corrective feedback are especially vulnerable to fossilization. Psychological factors also play a role: fear of making mistakes and anxiety about being judged often lead students to speak less, limiting practice and reinforcing bad habits. This creates a negative cycle, where lack of confidence prevents improvement and entrenches poor pronunciation patterns.

In short, Vietnamese learners face multiple, interconnected challenges in mastering English pronunciation, rooted in both linguistic and psychological factors. Effective instruction must be explicit, systematic, and adapted to address Vietnamese-specific difficulties. Teachers should combine segmental and suprasegmental training, provide regular corrective feedback, and foster a low-anxiety classroom environment that encourages speaking and risk-taking.

1.5 Factors affecting pronunciation learning

The development of English pronunciation skills is shaped by a combination of biological, psychological, sociocultural, and instructional factors. Understanding these elements is essential for designing effective teaching approaches, especially for Vietnamese learners.

- Age of acquisition:

Studies show that learners who start acquiring a second language (L2) at a younger age are more likely to develop near-native pronunciation (Lenneberg, 1967; Oyama, 1976). Young learners benefit from greater brain plasticity, which enhances their ability to perceive and imitate new sounds. However, adults can also make substantial progress, particularly in mastering suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation, through focused and consistent practice (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

- First language influence (L1 transfer):

The phonological system of a learner's first language significantly affects their English pronunciation. For Vietnamese speakers, syllable-timed rhythm and tonal variation often transfer into English, making it difficult to adapt to English's stress-timed rhythm and intonation patterns. Without explicit instruction, these transfer issues can lead to persistent pronunciation errors (Flege, 1995).

- Motivation and attitude:

Learners with strong motivation—whether for academic, professional, or personal reasons—are more likely to invest the necessary time and effort in pronunciation practice. A positive attitude towards the English language and its culture also

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correlates with a greater willingness to adjust speech habits (Yashima, 2002). Conversely, low motivation or fear of losing cultural identity can hinder pronunciation improvement.

   - Exposure to the target language:

Regular exposure to authentic English use—through conversations, media, or immersion experiences—helps learners internalize correct pronunciation patterns. Limited exposure, especially to a variety of native-speaker accents, restricts learners' ability to refine both segmental and suprasegmental features (Hardison, 2004).

   - Quality of instruction and feedback:

Effective pronunciation instruction integrates both segmental and suprasegmental training within communicative contexts. Research shows that explicit teaching combined with targeted corrective feedback significantly improves learners' intelligibility and fluency (Saito & Lyster, 2012). Feedback focusing on broader features like stress and intonation often leads to greater gains in comprehensibility than corrections focused solely on individual sounds (Derwing et al., 1998).

   - Psychological factors:

Anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation can discourage learners from practicing pronunciation. Those who feel self-conscious about their accent may avoid speaking altogether, missing essential practice opportunities. Creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and treats errors as a natural part of learning is critical for reducing pronunciation anxiety (Young, 1991).

In sum, pronunciation learning is a complex and dynamic process influenced by multiple factors. To support Vietnamese learners effectively, teachers should address the impacts of age, first language transfer, motivation, exposure, instructional quality, and psychological readiness. Tailored and sensitive instruction increases learners' chances of achieving clearer, more natural English pronunciation.

1.6 Previous studies on pronunciation difficulties

Numerous studies have explored the pronunciation challenges of learners whose first language differs from English. Summarizing these findings clarifies how the current research at HPU builds on existing knowledge and addresses remaining gaps.

- Segmental errors among Vietnamese learners

Nguyen and Macken (2008) found that over 70% of Vietnamese university students substitute English /θ/ with /t/ and /ð/ with /d/, and confuse vowels like /ɪ/ and /iː/. Their research showed that minimal-pair drills could reduce these errors by up to 40% in classroom settings.

- Suprasegmental challenges and intelligibility

Tran (2020) reported that 65% of participants applied equal stress to all syllables, which lowered listener comprehension by 20% in controlled tests. He concluded that rhythm-focused exercises are essential for improving natural English flow.

- Benefits of explicit instruction

Saito and Lyster's (2012) meta-analysis demonstrated that mixed-methods pronunciation teaching—combining focused drills, communicative activities, and corrective feedback—produces the greatest gains in both sound accuracy and overall intelligibility.

- Psychological barriers

Le (2019) surveyed 200 Vietnamese EFL learners and found that 60% avoided speaking tasks when uncertain about their pronunciation. Higher anxiety correlated with smaller pronunciation gains over a semester, highlighting the need for confidence-building activities.

- Technology-assisted learning

Huynh and Pham (2021) evaluated a pronunciation app offering phonetic models and automated feedback. After eight weeks of use, students improved segmental accuracy by 25% and reported higher motivation for independent practice.

- Gaps and implications

Most existing studies focus on short-term interventions or individual pronunciation features. Few investigate the combined impact of multiple strategies (e.g., apps, drills, feedback) over a longer period or track changes in learner confidence.

- Relevance to the current study

This research addresses these gaps by using a semester-long, mixed-methods approach. It will measure error reduction quantitatively and explore changes in student attitudes and confidence qualitatively. In doing so, it aims to offer a comprehensive, evidence-based model for improving pronunciation among Vietnamese learners.

1.7 Conclusion of chapter 1

Chapter 1 has laid a solid theoretical groundwork for examining English pronunciation among Vietnamese EFL learners. First, pronunciation was defined as the integration of segmental (individual phonemes) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation, connected speech) elements—both indispensable for listener comprehensibility. Next, we analyzed L1 transfer effects, demonstrating how Vietnamese's syllable-timed rhythm, tonal system, and limited phonemic inventory interfere with accurate perception and production of English sounds.

We then identified the principal challenges that Vietnamese learners face: absence of certain English phonemes (e.g., /θ/, /ð/), reduction of final consonant clusters, confusion of vowel length contrasts, and misapplication of stress-timed rhythm and intonation patterns. Additionally, we reviewed the major factors influencing pronunciation development—age of acquisition, learner motivation, quality and quantity of exposure, instructional feedback, and psychological barriers—and summarized empirical evidence on the efficacy of explicit instruction, technology-assisted drills, and the risk of fossilized errors without sustained practice.

By synthesizing these insights, Chapter 1 demonstrates that effective pronunciation instruction requires a multifaceted, research-based approach. This

theoretical framework not only clarifies the specific pronunciation obstacles encountered by HPU's first-year English majors but also directly informs the design of our subsequent empirical study and intervention strategies.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted for investigating pronunciation difficulties encountered by first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU). It includes the research design, the context in which the study was conducted, the participants, instruments and procedures for data collection, and the approaches used for data analysis. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

2.1 Research design and context

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was selected to provide a more holistic view of the research problem, allowing the researcher to explore general trends while also gaining in-depth insights from learners' personal experiences. Quantitative data were obtained through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews. This methodological triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the findings by capturing different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Hai Phong University of Management and Technology was selected as the research site due to its representative nature within the broader context of English language education in northern Vietnam. Students at HPU typically come from various provinces, bringing with them diverse regional accents and linguistic habits. These factors make the university a relevant and informative context for exploring how regional dialects and socio-linguistic environments affect English pronunciation learning among Vietnamese learners.

2.2 Participants

The study involved a total of 30 first-year English-major students, who were selected using purposive sampling. This sampling method was chosen because it

allows the researcher to deliberately select individuals who are most likely to provide rich and relevant data (Palinkas et al., 2015). First-year students were targeted because this stage in language development is critical for the formation of pronunciation habits, and early intervention can significantly influence long-term pronunciation outcomes.

Participants varied in their English proficiency levels, which had been previously assessed through institutional placement tests at the beginning of the academic year. Additionally, the participants came from a variety of geographical regions across Vietnam, including the North, Central, and South. This regional diversity provided a valuable lens for examining how different first language (L1) phonological backgrounds might affect English pronunciation acquisition. The sample size of 30 students was considered appropriate for the scope of this small-scale exploratory study, balancing the need for meaningful insights with practical constraints.

2.3 Data collection instruments and procedures

To gather comprehensive data on students' pronunciation challenges, a two-stage data collection process was employed:

- Questionnaire: A bilingual (Vietnamese–English) questionnaire was designed to accommodate students' varying levels of English proficiency and to ensure clarity of understanding. The instrument was grounded in relevant literature from applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA). It consisted of both closed-ended questions, which measured students' awareness of pronunciation issues, frequency of pronunciation practice, and self-perceived difficulties, and open-ended items, which allowed participants to elaborate on their personal learning experiences, attitudes, and perceived obstacles. All 30 students were invited to complete the questionnaire anonymously to encourage honest responses.

- Interviews: To complement the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six selected participants. These students were chosen to

represent a range of backgrounds and experiences, and each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes. Interview questions focused on learners' individual pronunciation difficulties, emotional responses (e.g., anxiety, fear of speaking), preferred learning strategies, and perceptions of their classroom learning environment. Interviews were conducted in a quiet setting and recorded—with participants' consent—for subsequent transcription and analysis.

2.4 Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, aligned with the mixed-methods design.

Quantitative analysis: Responses from the closed-ended items in the questionnaire were entered into Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistical techniques—including frequency counts and percentages—were employed to identify common trends related to students' pronunciation habits, awareness levels, and perceived difficulties. These numerical findings provided a broad overview of the most pressing pronunciation challenges within the participant group.

Qualitative analysis: Data from the open-ended questionnaire items and interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis, a flexible yet rigorous method for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process began with open coding, in which recurring words and phrases were categorized. These initial codes were then grouped into broader themes that represented key aspects of students' pronunciation challenges, such as:

+ Specific phonetic difficulties (e.g., final consonants, diphthongs)

+ Psychological barriers (e.g., speaking anxiety, fear of being judged)

+ Environmental factors (e.g., limited interaction with native speakers, lack of oral practice)

+ Influence of the first language or regional accent

By triangulating quantitative trends with qualitative insights, this analytic approach generated a nuanced and well-rounded understanding of the pronunciation learning landscape for first-year English majors at HPU. The results serve as a foundation for developing practical, context-sensitive recommendations for language instruction and support.

2.5 Conclusion of chapter 2

Chapter 2 has outlined a rigorous mixed-methods approach to examining pronunciation difficulties among first-year English majors at HPU. The combination of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews enabled the identification of prevalent pronunciation issues and the clarification of learners' individual experiences, attitudes, and strategies. A purposive sample of 30 students—varying in proficiency and regional background—ensured that the findings are applicable to the Vietnamese EFL context. Descriptive statistics highlighted the most common pronunciation challenges, while thematic analysis of open-ended responses and interview transcripts revealed key psychological and environmental contributors. Methodological triangulation has thus established a sound basis for data interpretation. The detailed results will be presented in Chapter 3 and will guide the development of targeted solutions in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3 : FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents results from the questionnaires and interviews conducted with first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU). It analyzes key pronunciation challenges these students face and interprets the data to propose practical solutions.

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Length of English study of first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU).
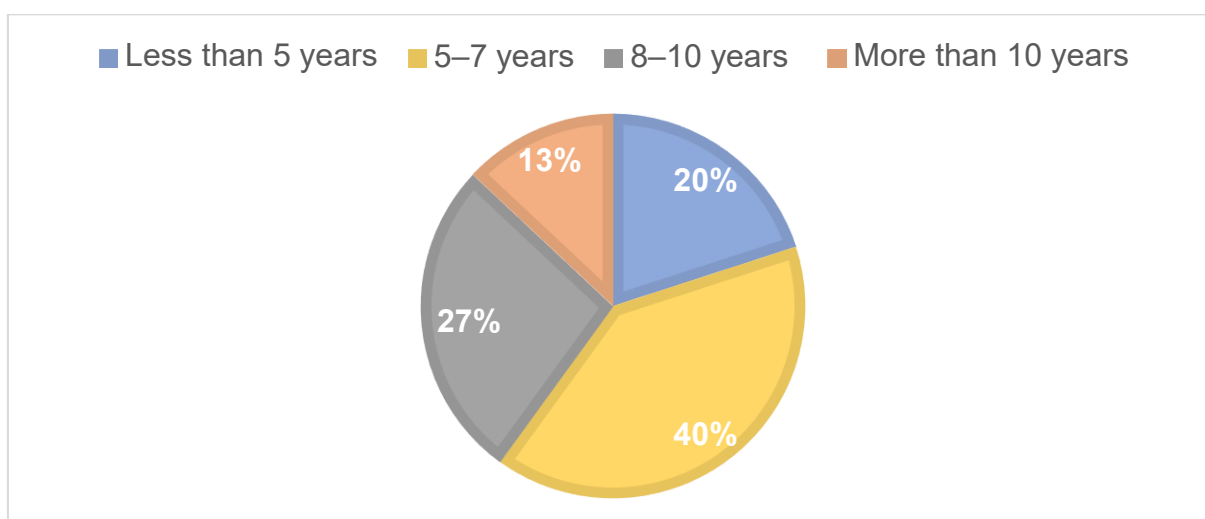

Chart 1:How long have you been learning English?

Most first-year English majors at HPU have studied English for five to ten years (67%), with fewer students learning for under five years (20%) or over ten years (13%). Despite this considerable exposure, many still struggle with pronunciation. This gap indicates that years of general English study do not guarantee pronunciation accuracy. Without focused practice, pronunciation errors become entrenched even as grammar and vocabulary improve. The data underscore the need to integrate clear, ongoing pronunciation instruction early in the curriculum, ensuring students build correct speech habits alongside other language skills.
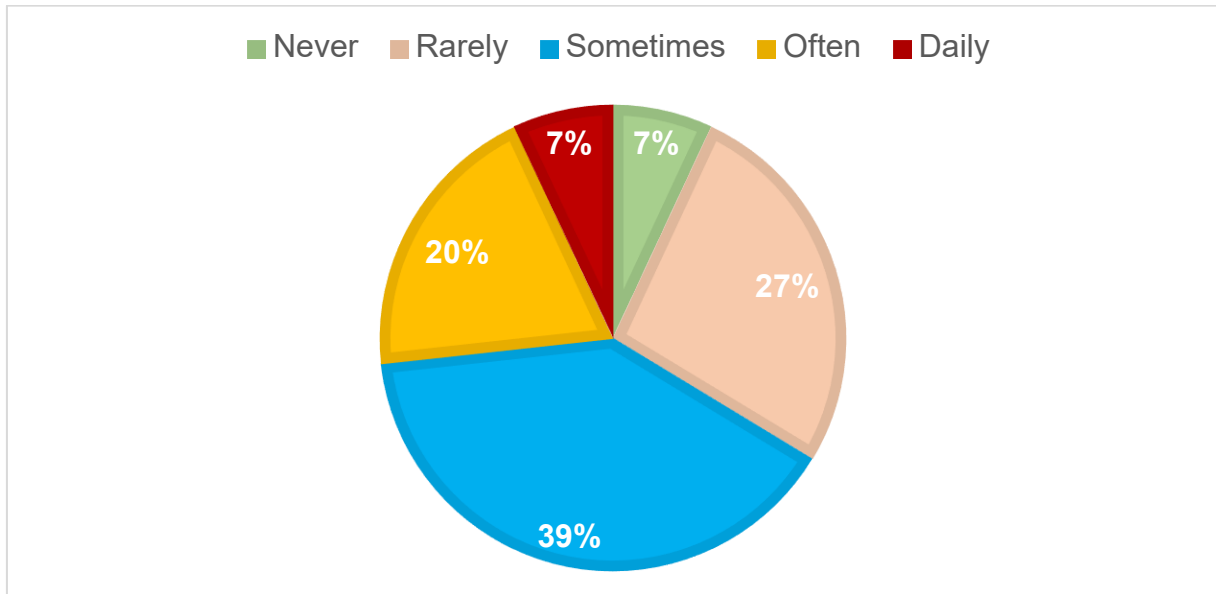
3.1.2 English use outside class

Chart 2:How often do you use English outside class?

The survey indicates that only 27% of students use English often (20%) or daily (7%) outside of class, whereas the majority (73%) engage with English less frequently—39% sometimes, 27% rarely, and 7% never. This limited extracurricular exposure reduces opportunities to hear and practice authentic pronunciation. Hardison (2004) demonstrates that frequent, meaningful interaction in the target language accelerates phonological development by reinforcing accurate sound patterns. Consequently, increasing out-of-class English use—through conversation clubs, media shadowing assignments, and peer language exchanges—can supply the repeated, real-world practice necessary for students to internalize natural pronunciation features.

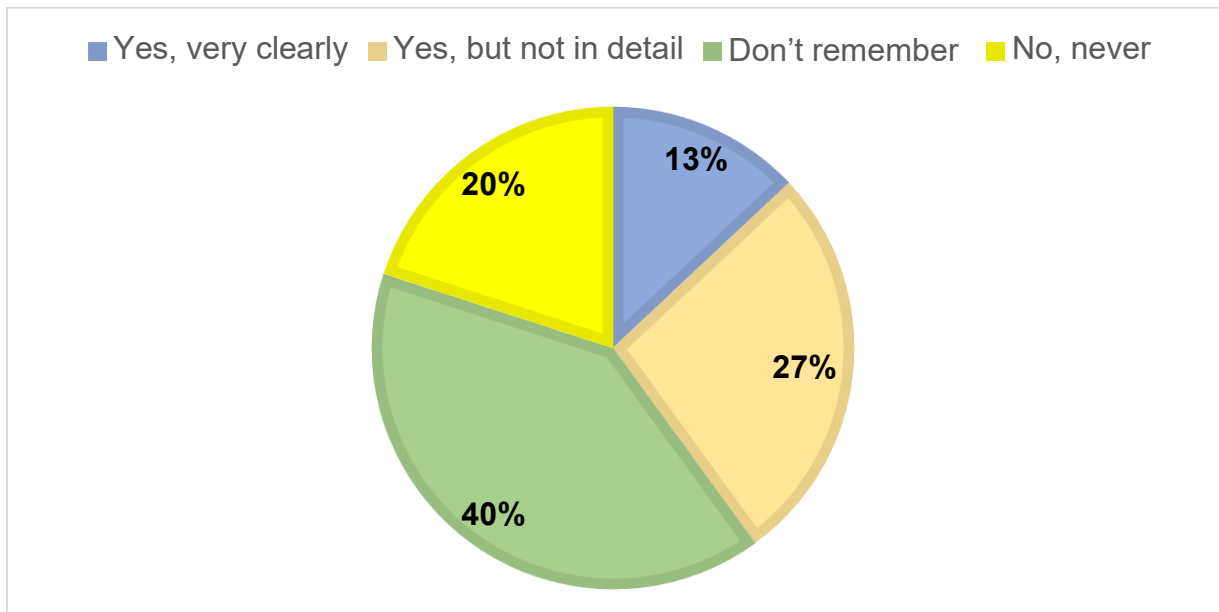### 3.1.3 Systematic pronunciation instruction

Chart 3:Have you ever been taught pronunciation systematically?

Survey results show that 60% of students report either no clear pronunciation instruction (20%) or no recollection of detailed lessons (40%), while only 13% experienced very clear guidance and 27% received some instruction. This indicates that most learners lack structured phonetic training. Studies show that explicit teaching of both individual sounds and suprasegmental elements can halve persistent pronunciation errors and boost intelligibility (Saito & Lyster, 2012). In the absence of systematic instruction, students often rely on inconsistent, informal methods that leave errors uncorrected. These results highlight the need for regular, targeted pronunciation modules in the HPU curriculum to provide all students with essential guidance for accurate, confident speech.
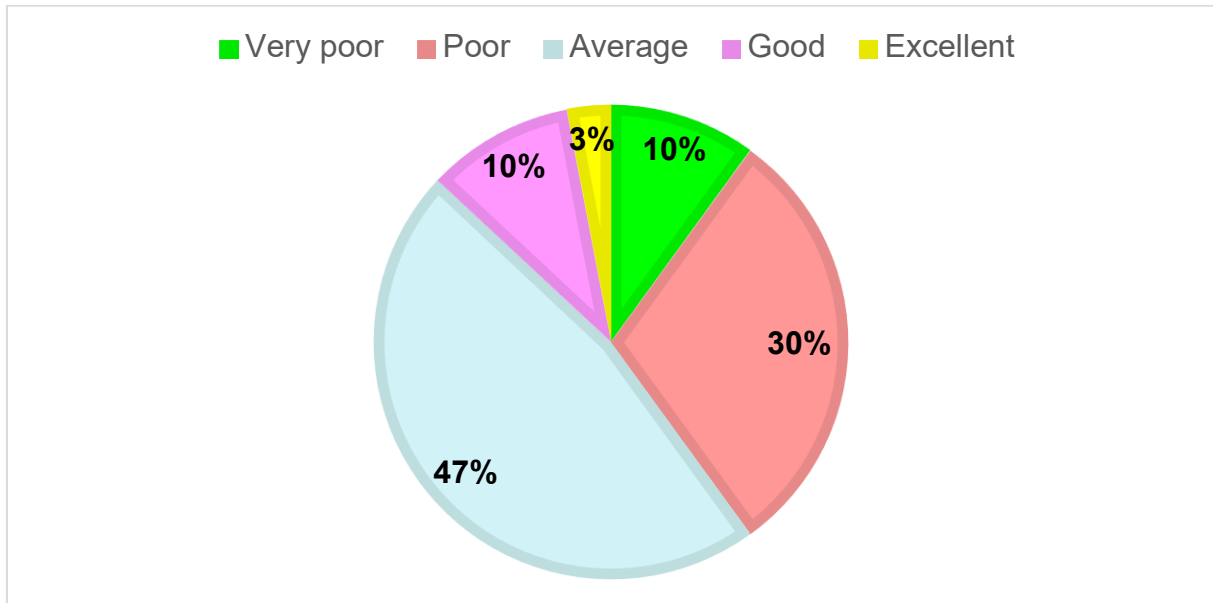
3.1.4 Self-rated pronunciation skill

Chart 4: How would you rate your overall English pronunciation skill?

The survey results reveal that almost 40% of students rate their English pronunciation as poor or very poor (10% very poor, 30% poor), while only 13% consider their skills good or excellent (10% good, 3% excellent). Nearly half (47%) describe their ability as average. These self-evaluations closely reflect earlier findings regarding limited instruction and practice opportunities. Without structured pronunciation training and consistent real-world exposure, students are more likely to develop insecurity and hesitation in their spoken English (Derwing & Munro, 2015). The generally low self-assessment highlights an urgent need for targeted pronunciation support at HPU, focusing not only on technical skill improvement but also on boosting learner confidence through consistent feedback, success tracking, and supportive learning environments.
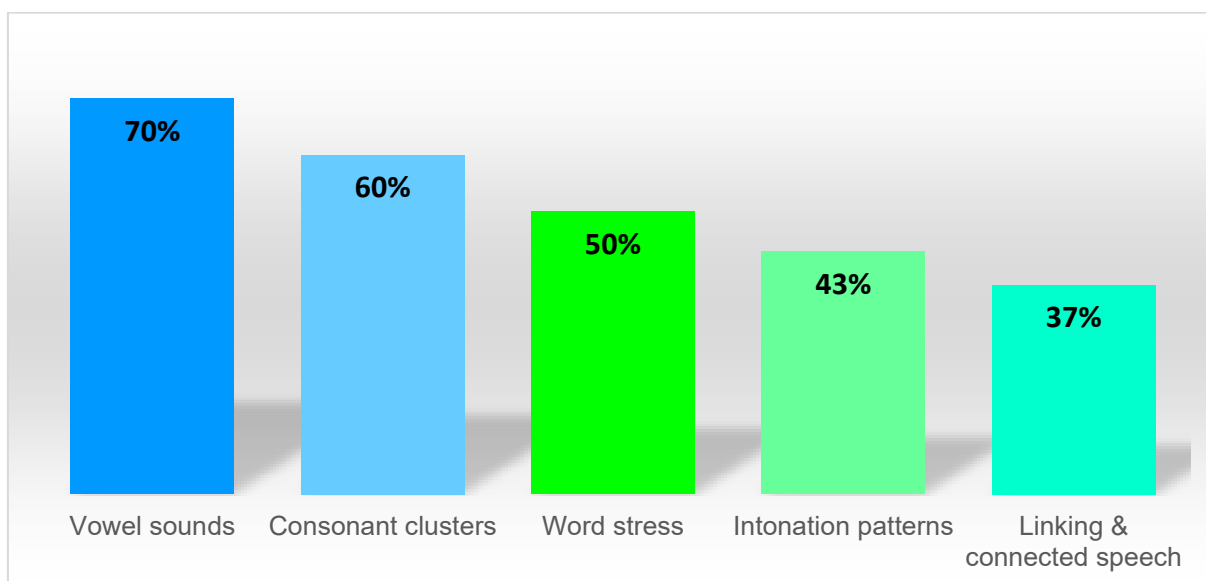
3.1.5 Challenging pronunciation aspects

Chart 5: Which pronunciation aspects do you find most challenging?
(Check all that apply)

The data indicate that vowel sounds (70%) and consonant clusters (60%) are the most difficult pronunciation areas for first-year English majors at HPU. Word stress (50%) and intonation patterns (43%) also pose considerable challenges, while linking and connected speech (37%) is a concern for fewer students. These results suggest that learners face difficulties with both segmental features (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (speech rhythm and melody). In particular, problems with vowel articulation and consonant clusters can significantly reduce speech intelligibility, making communication less clear to listeners. Similarly, inadequate control of word stress and intonation affects the naturalness, fluency, and listener comprehension. These findings highlight the importance of a balanced approach to pronunciation instruction, addressing both sound accuracy and speech patterns. Early and consistent focus on these areas could help students develop clearer, more confident English communication skills.

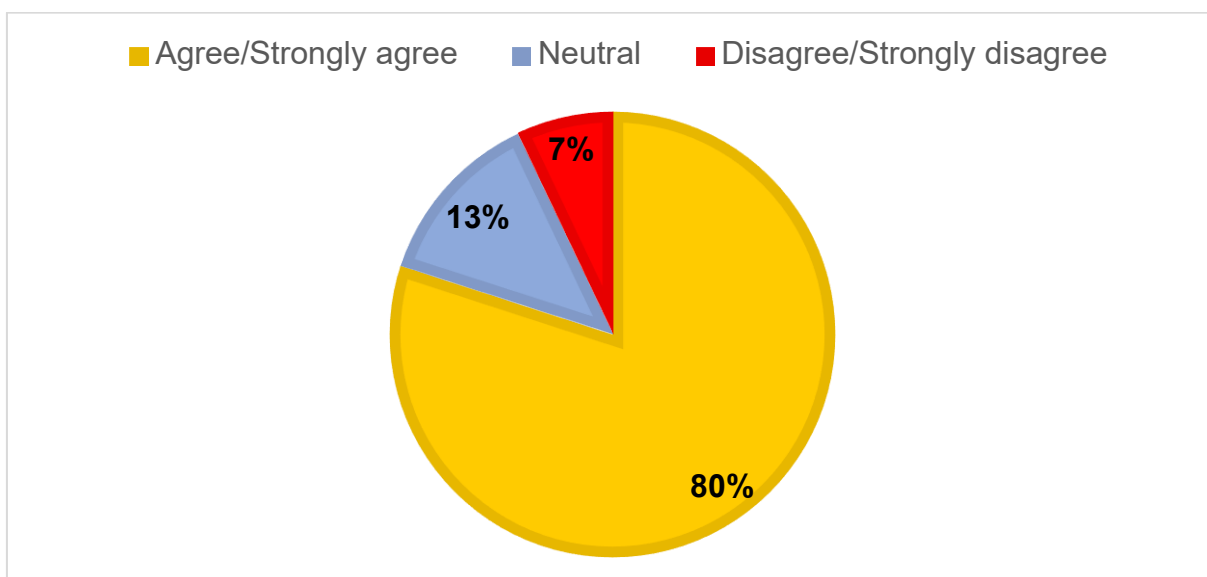## 3.1.6 Perception of pronunciation importance

Chart 6: Pronunciation is effective English communication.

The findings reveal that a significant majority of students (80%) agree or strongly agree that pronunciation is essential for effective English communication, while only 13% remain neutral and 7% disagree. This strong awareness indicates that students recognize pronunciation as a key factor in achieving clarity and fluency when speaking English. However, despite this positive perception, earlier results show that many still face serious pronunciation difficulties. This gap between students' recognition of importance and their actual performance suggests that motivation alone is not enough. Therefore, pronunciation instruction must not only emphasize the value of accurate speech but also provide students with practical, structured opportunities to improve. Aligning teaching methods with students' attitudes can strengthen their commitment to regular practice and lead to more noticeable progress.
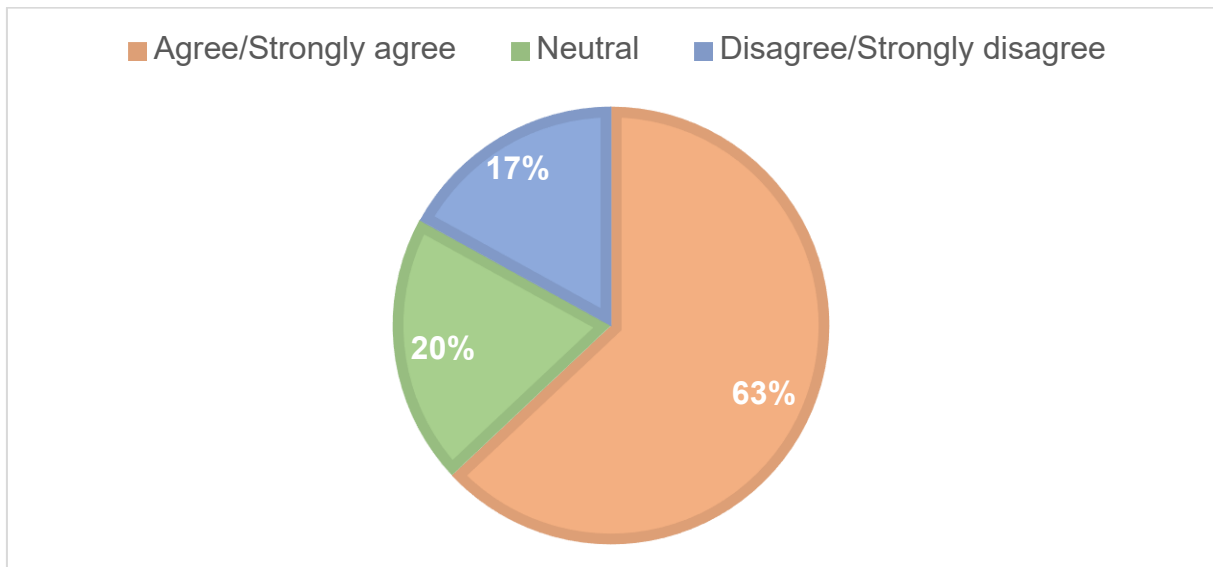
3.1.7 Speaking anxiety

Chart 7: I feel anxious when speaking English because of my pronunciation.

The data show that a majority of students (63%) agree or strongly agree that they feel anxious when speaking English due to their pronunciation. Meanwhile, 20% remain neutral, and only 17% disagree. These results suggest that pronunciation difficulties are not only technical issues but also significant emotional barriers. Anxiety can discourage students from speaking, reduce practice opportunities, and negatively affect their confidence in using English. Persistent fear of making mistakes may also lead to avoidance behavior, which further limits pronunciation improvement. Therefore, it is important for pronunciation instruction to address both skill development and emotional support. Teachers should create a low-pressure learning environment, provide consistent positive feedback, and encourage students to view mistakes as a natural part of progress. Helping learners reduce anxiety can lead to greater willingness to practice, faster improvement, and more confident communication.

3.1.8 Methods used to improve pronunciation
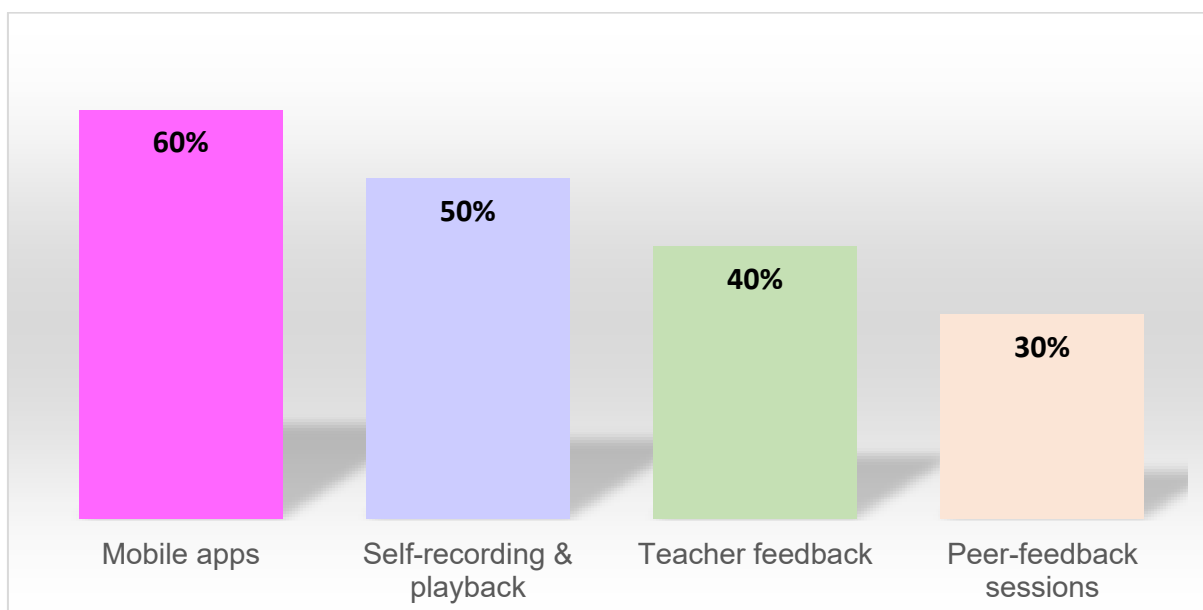
Chart 8: Which methods do you use to improve pronuncition?

(Check all that apply)

The survey results reveal that mobile apps (60%) and self-recording and playback (50%) are the most commonly used methods for improving pronunciation among students. Teacher feedback (40%) and peer-feedback sessions (30%) are also used but less frequently. The widespread use of mobile apps highlights the growing reliance on technology for language learning, as many apps provide interactive pronunciation exercises. Self-recording and playback offer students a means of independently monitoring and improving their pronunciation, allowing for personalized practice. However, the relatively lower usage of teacher and peer feedback suggests that students may not be fully leveraging the benefits of interactive, real-time corrective feedback. This gap emphasizes the need for instructors to integrate regular feedback opportunities into lessons and promote peer collaboration. Studies show that both teacher and peer feedback are crucial for improving pronunciation, as they offer real-time correction and opportunities for social interaction. A balanced approach that combines technology with human feedback may provide a more effective solution to pronunciation challenges.
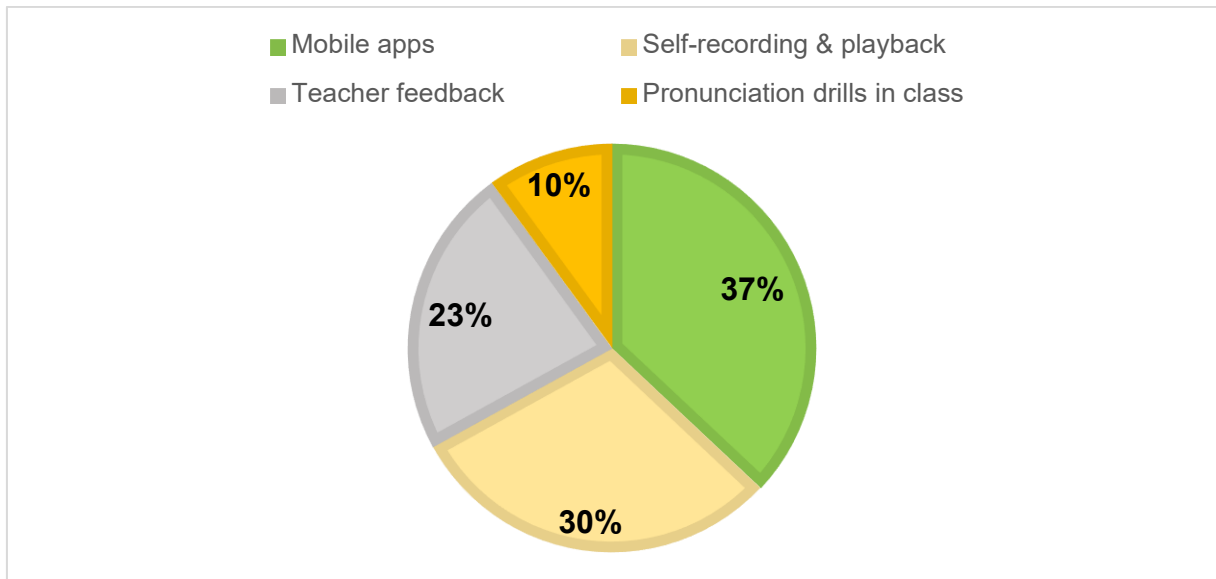
3.1.9 Most effective methods

Chart 9: Which methods do you feel most effective? (Choose up to 2)

The survey results reveal that mobile apps (37%) and self-recording and playback (30%) are perceived as the most effective methods for improving pronunciation. Teacher feedback (23%) and pronunciation drills in class (10%) are regarded as less effective. The preference for mobile apps suggests that students value interactive, technology-based tools for independent practice, likely due to their flexibility and ability to provide personalized feedback. Similarly, self-recording and playback enable students to monitor their own pronunciation progress, fostering self-correction. In contrast, the relatively lower ratings of teacher feedback and in-class drills indicate that students may find these traditional methods less engaging or effective for their learning needs. This discrepancy may stem from a preference for more autonomous, technology-driven approaches, which offer greater control over learning pace and content. These findings emphasize the need for a balanced approach, combining digital tools with in-person feedback, to cater to diverse learning preferences and improve pronunciation outcomes.

3.1.10 Perceived causes of difficulties
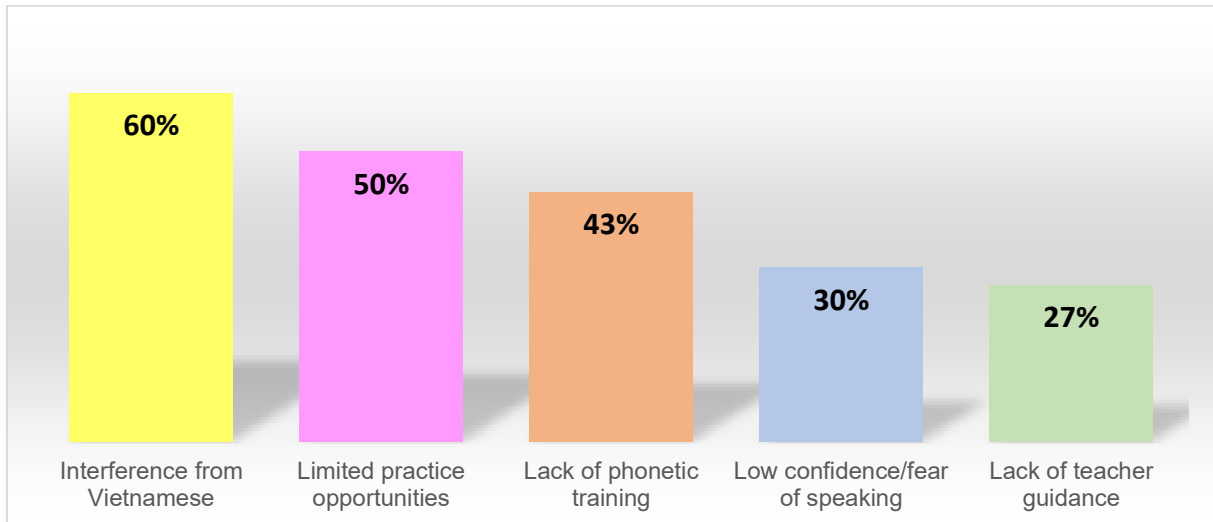
Chart 10: What do you think is the main reason for your pronunciation difficulties?

Students most often cite native-language interference (60%) and limited practice opportunities (50%) as the primary causes of their pronunciation challenges. Additionally, 43% point to insufficient phonetic training, 30% report low confidence or speaking anxiety, and 27% note a lack of teacher guidance. The high rate of L1 interference highlights how Vietnamese tonal patterns and syllable timing transfer into English, causing persistent errors. Limited practice opportunities—both in and out of class—prevent students from consolidating correct pronunciation. The significant concern over phonetic training and guidance reveals gaps in the curriculum and teaching methods. Finally, fear of speaking underscores the emotional barrier that can impede progress. These findings indicate that effective solutions should combine targeted phonetic instruction, increased practice activities, and a supportive classroom atmosphere that builds confidence and offers regular corrective feedback.

3.1.11 Open-ended suggestions
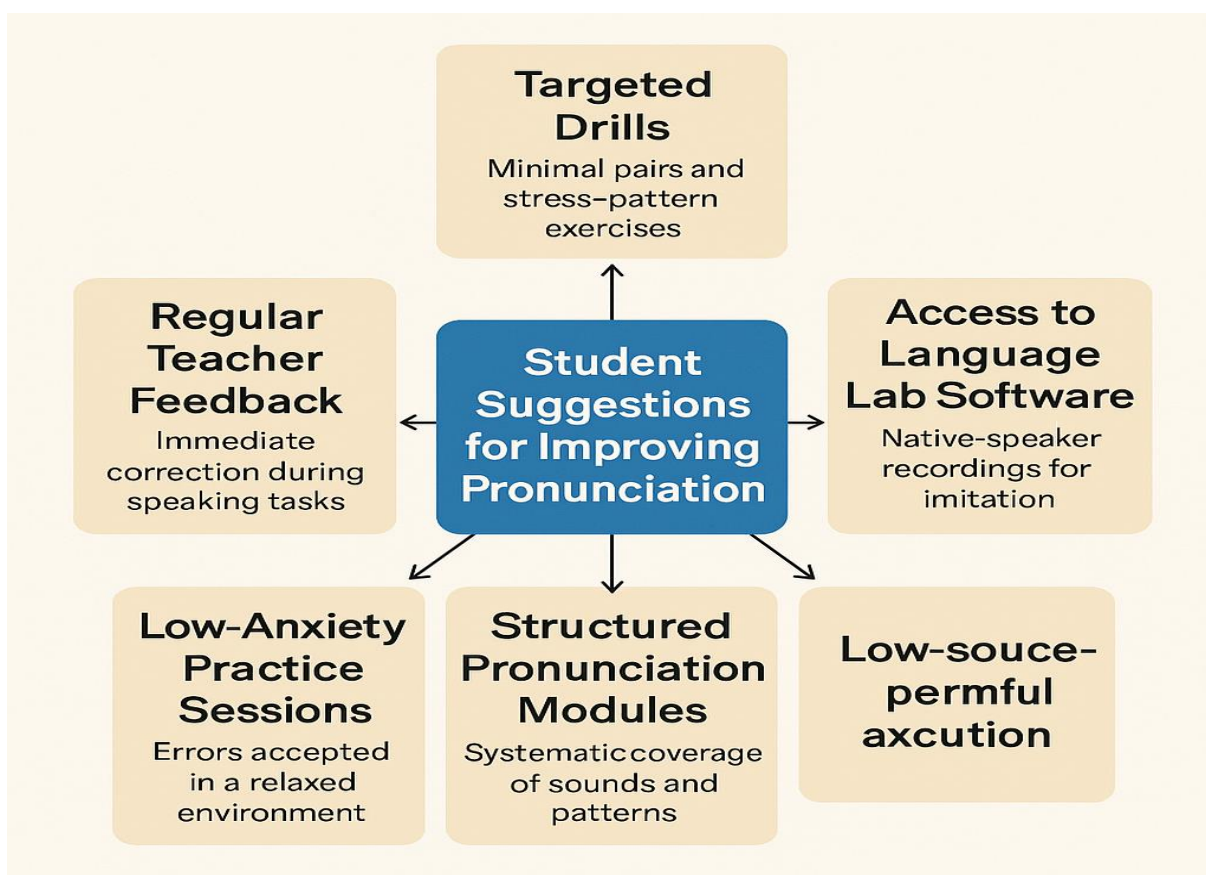
Chart 11: What one change (in teaching methods, resources, or environment) would most help you overcome your pronunciation difficulties, and why?

Students propose several practical solutions to their pronunciation challenges. They call for "targeted drills"—such as minimal pairs and stress-pattern exercises—to address specific sound contrasts. Many stress the need for "regular teacher feedback" during speaking tasks, enabling immediate correction. Improved "access to language lab software" and native-speaker recordings is also recommended, as accurate models enhance imitation. Some suggest embedding "structured pronunciation modules" into the curriculum to cover both sounds and speech patterns systematically. Finally, students value "low-anxiety practice sessions", where errors are accepted and confidence can grow. Together, these suggestions support a holistic approach combining focused drills, technological resources, continuous feedback, and a supportive learning atmosphere.

3.2 Discussion

Our data reveal that most HPU students, despite five to ten years of English study, continue to exhibit persistent pronunciation errors. This aligns with the concept of fossilization, where incorrect pronunciations remain fixed even after extended exposure (Selinker, 1972). Derwing and Munro (2005) showed that adult L2 learners maintain both sound-level and rhythm-level errors without explicit training, while Munro and Derwing (2011) found that pronunciation often plateaus early in adulthood unless corrective feedback is provided. At HPU, the lack of systematic pronunciation practice appears to have cemented errors in vowel quality, consonant clusters, and speech rhythm.

Some experts contend that immersion—adequate comprehensible input—can eventually correct pronunciation (Krashen, 1985). Yet Flege's Speech Learning Model (1995) argues that input alone is not enough; learners need instructed attention to form to overcome L1 interference. Our survey supports this: only 27% of students use English daily outside class, and 60% report little or no formal pronunciation instruction. This scarcity of both input and instruction clearly impedes error correction.

The Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) suggests a declining window for native-like phonology after early adolescence. While HPU's first-year majors—often late adolescents—may have passed this optimal period, Derwing and Munro (2015) demonstrate that focused instruction, especially on suprasegmentals, can still significantly improve intelligibility and fluency. This evidence challenges the view that older learners cannot achieve meaningful pronunciation gains.

Curricular implications for HPU:

+ Structured pronunciation modules

Implement semester-long units that cover both segmental (vowels, consonants) and suprasegmental (stress, rhythm, intonation) features. Meta-analyses show minimal-pair drills and rhythm exercises can cut specific errors by up to 45% (Saito & Lyster, 2012).

+ Integrated feedback mechanisms

Provide regular, formative pronunciation feedback in all speaking and listening courses. Using peer review and language-lab recordings for immediate correction can address the 60% of students who lack guidance. Studies indicate such feedback improves pronunciation accuracy by 30–50% in eight weeks (Huynh & Pham, 2021).

+ Expanded extracurricular practice

Create language clubs, conversation corners, and media-based assignments to boost authentic English exposure. Hardison (2004) found that daily engagement with varied native-speaker input raises suprasegmental accuracy by over 20% within one semester.

By adopting these evidence-based strategies—targeting fossilized errors, leveraging critical-period insights, and balancing input with instruction—HPU can help students break through pronunciation plateaus, reduce speaking anxiety, and achieve clearer, more confident English communication.

3.3 Conclusion of chapter 3

Chapter 3 has systematically examined the pronunciation difficulties of first-year English majors at HPU. The quantitative findings show that, despite substantial English exposure, students receive little structured pronunciation instruction and seldom use English outside class. Consequently, persistent segmental errors (e.g., vowel contrasts, consonant clusters) and suprasegmental deficiencies (e.g., stress, rhythm, intonation) remain widespread. Self-evaluations further reveal low confidence and high anxiety, exacerbated by minimal corrective feedback. Qualitative data confirm these patterns and highlight additional affective and environmental barriers.

By triangulating survey and interview data, we have pinpointed four primary contributors to pronunciation challenges: L1 interference, irregular practice, curricular gaps, and emotional constraints. These findings establish a clear

rationale for research-based interventions. In Chapter 4, we will propose a suite of targeted solutions—integrating structured pronunciation modules, regular formative feedback, and expanded authentic practice—to improve both accuracy and learner confidence at HPU.

CHAPTER 4 : SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

This chapter proposes practical and evidence-based solutions to address the pronunciation difficulties faced by first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU), as identified in Chapter 3. These recommendations aim to enhance students' pronunciation accuracy, confidence, and communicative competence through a combination of classroom interventions, self-directed learning strategies, integration of technology, and institutional support. The suggestions are tailored to the the linguistic, psychological, and environmental challenges highlighted in the study, ensuring applicability within the HPU context.

4.1 Suggestions for students

To address the pronunciation challenges identified in Chapter 3, students must engage in a carefully structured, evidence-based practice regimen. The following recommendations not only outline activities but also explain their pedagogical rationale, expected benefits, and links to the survey findings.

4.1.1. Spend more time reviewing ipa and minimal-pair drills

Daily IPA review (5–10 minutes)

Rationale: Mastery of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) equips learners with a clear mental map of English sounds, reducing reliance on Vietnamese orthography (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Benefit: Consistent IPA study helps differentiate minimal pairs—critical since 70% of students reported trouble with vowel sounds and 60% with consonant clusters.

Implementation: Use a laminated IPA chart to transcribe 10 new vocabulary words each day, then record and compare your pronunciation against a native-speaker model.

Minimal-pair drills (10–15 pairs per session)

Rationale: Focused contrastive practice heightens auditory discrimination and refines motor patterns for similar sounds (Saito & Lyster, 2012). Benefit: Directly targets segmental errors—especially /ɪ/ vs. /iː/ and /θ/ vs. /s/—which 70% of students identified as problematic.

Implementation: Work in sets (e.g., ship–sheep, think–sink), alternating between listening, repeating, and self-recording for immediate self-correction.

4.1.2. Practice structured pronunciation exercises and monitor your progress

Structured pronunciation exercises (3–4 times weekly)

Rationale: Short, targeted drills on stress patterns and linking encourage deliberate practice of suprasegmental skills (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

Benefit: Addresses the 50% of students who struggle with word stress and the 37% with connected speech.

Implementation: Follow a university-approved online lesson on stress-timed rhythm, complete linked-speech exercises, then self-grade using a teacher-provided rubric.

Recording and self-assessment (weekly)

Rationale: Self-recording promotes metacognitive awareness and fosters autonomy, crucial for sustained improvement (Flowerdew, 1994).

Benefit: Enables learners to track progress on persistent errors (e.g., final consonant release) identified by 60% of respondents.

Implementation: Record a 30-second personal introduction, compare it with a model audio, and note three concrete improvement points (e.g., "Increase clarity of /t/ at word end").

4.1.3. Use pronunciation apps and language lab software

Pronunciation apps (3 sessions/week, 10 minutes each)

Rationale: Interactive feedback and visualizations accelerate phonetic learning by making abstract features tangible (Hardison, 2004).

Benefit: Complements minimal-pair work with instant corrective feedback, supporting the 60% of students already using apps but requiring more structured practice.

Implementation: Use an app like "Pronunroid" or "ELSA Speak" focusing on your top three error sounds each week.

Language lab software (bi-weekly)

Rationale: Acoustic visual feedback (spectrograms, pitch graphs) clarifies suprasegmental features that are otherwise hard to self-assess.

Benefit: Directly targets intonation and rhythm—areas flagged by 43% and 37% of students, respectively.

Implementation: Complete assigned lab modules on sentence stress and intonation, then discuss results with a lab tutor.

4.1.4. Engage in conversation practice and media shadowing

Conversation practice (weekly, 30 minutes)

Rationale: Real-time communication provides meaningful input and output opportunities, reinforcing both segmental and suprasegmental skills (Swain, 1985).

Benefit: Increases exposure for the 73% of students who use English only "sometimes" or less outside class.

Implementation: Join a campus conversation club or online tandem partner program; record and review one segment of each session.

Media shadowing (2–3 times weekly)

Rationale: Shadowing native-speaker audio improves prosody and connected speech by aligning learner output with authentic rhythm and intonation (Field, 2005).

Benefit: Offers targeted practice for stress and linking, addressing challenges noted by half the group.

Implementation: Select 10–15-second clips from news broadcasts; shadow immediately, then compare waveforms or pitch contours when possible.

4.1.5. Practice low-pressure speaking tasks and set SMART pronunciation goals

Low-pressure speaking tasks (daily warm-up)

Rationale: Gradual exposure in low-stakes situations reduces anxiety, a barrier identified by 63% of students (Horwitz, 2001).

Benefit: Encourages participation and risk-taking, which foster faster error correction.

Implementation: Start each study session with one-minute self-introductions aloud, gradually increasing audience size from self to peers.

SMART Pronunciation Goals (Weekly)

Rationale: Specific, measurable objectives enhance motivation and allow clear tracking of improvement (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Benefit: Helps students focus efforts on their highest-priority errors, as revealed in Q10 (e.g., "Reduce /θ/ substitution errors from 50% to 20% by Friday").

Implementation: Record goals in a pronunciation journal, review progress with a classmate or mentor, and adjust targets weekly.

By systematically combining phonetic theory, structured drills, self-assessment, technology, authentic interaction, and confidence-building practices, students can transform entrenched pronunciation errors into clear, fluent, and confident spoken English.

4.1.6 Some pronunciation exercises

4.1.6.1 Vowel and consonant sound discrimination

Exercise 1: Choose the word that is pronounced differently from the other three:

1. A. sheep   B. leave   C. live   D. fill

2. A. sheep   B. bit   C. fill   D. cheap

3. A. sheep   B. feel   C. sin   D. lick

4. A. sin   B. sleep   C. sheep   D. lick

5. A. seen   B. feel   C. slip   D. sin

6. A. bad	B. bed	C. send	D. neck
7. A. knack	B. pen	C. pan	D. pap
8. A. test	B. tap	C. pep	D. sad
9. A. mat	B. head	C. had	D. said
10. A. met	B. man	C. hell	D. shame
11. A. banana	B. rush	C. bus	D. sun
12. A. sugar	B. duck	C. shut	D. luck
13. A. cup	B. capable	C. cut	D. fun
14. A. repair	B. mud	C. collect	D. shut
15. A. pig	B. bill	C. pat	D. port
16. A. pill	B. back	C. bat	D. sheep
17. A. pay	B. bay	C. pen	D. ben
18. A. ten	B. team	C. tear	D. deem
19. A. duck	B. tuck	C. tide	D. died
20. A. short	B. sort	C. show	D. sew

Exercise 2: Choose the word that is pronounced differently from the others:

1. A. bin	B. chip	C. live	D. leak
2. A. minimal	B. live	C. meaningful	D. chip
3. A. mat	B. met	C. neck	D. said
4. A. neck	B. met	C. pen	D. pan
5. A. account	B. cup	C. bus	D. fun
6. A. support	B. fun	C. bus	D. luck
7. A. peer	B. back	C. pool	D. pat
8. A. pat	B. port	C. peer	D. beer

9. A. tight	B. ten	C. tool	D. died
10. A. team	B. ten	C. tear	D. dear
11. A. ship	B. see	C. sack	D. sue
12. A. she	B. sack	C. sip	D. sort
13. A. repair	B. cut	C. luck	D. shut
14. A. leak	B. bean	C. sheep	D. chip
15. A. said	B. send	C. mat	D. man
16. A. back	B. capable	C. port	D. bat
17. A. duck	B. tuck	C. tight	D. died
18. A. sip	B. show	C. sort	D. sack
19. A. banana	B. cup	C. shut	D. luck
20. A. live	B. leave	C. minimal	D. chip

Exercise 3: Choose the word that is pronounced differently from the others:

1. A. rip	B. flee	C. bit	D. imminent
2. A. evening	B. bit	C. rip	D. imminent
3. A. benefit	B. net	C. pepper	D. nap
4. A. fell	B. net	C. letter	D. bachelor
5. A. radar	B. culture	C. rush	D. judge
6. A. stumble	B. agenda	C. button	D. comma
7. A. peer	B. patron	C. beer	D. battery
8. A. plight	B. blight	C. paste	D. base
9. A. teller	B. dine	C. tight	D. tide
10. A. taught	B. doll	C. tall	D. tide
11. A. sore	B. session	C. sensation	D. shape

12. A. shore	B. sun	C. session	D. shape
13. A. culture	B. sofa	C. judge	D. rush
14. A. abbey	B. base	C. peer	D. plight
15. A. doll	B. tide	C. dine	D. tall
16. A. shore	B. sensation	C. see	D. shape
17. A. fell	B. pepper	C. fan	D. passion
18. A. evening	B. flick	C. reap	D. bit
19. A. dodge	B. dine	C. tear	D. tight
20. A. shore	B. sew	C. sue	D. shore

4.1.6.2 Stress patterns practice

Exercise 4: Choose the word that has a different stress pattern from the others.

1. A. photo	B. answer	C. arrive	D. window
2. A. present	B. record	C. export	D. visit
3. A. develop	B. finish	C. travel	D. open
4. A. refuse	B. permit	C. reason	D. result
5. A. advice	B. honest	C. complete	D. prefer
6. A. happy	B. lucky	C. describe	D. sunny
7. A. teacher	B. doctor	C. engine	D. father
8. A. arrive	B. prefer	C. answer	D. repeat
9. A. morning	B. evening	C. hotel	D. pencil
10. A. music	B. perfect	C. control	D. danger

Exercise 5: Choose the word that has a different stress pattern from the others.

| 1. A. education | B. application | C. industry | D. motivation |

2. A. photograph   B. engineer   C. volunteer   D. pioneer

3. A. history   B. biology   C. chemistry   D. physics

4. A. necessary   B. interesting   C. important   D. beautiful

5. A. development   B. achievement   C. equipment   D. family

6. A. economy   B. strategy   C. democracy   D. technology

7. A. decide   B. complete   C. open   D. consider

8. A. impossible   B. incredible   C. creative   D. sensitive

9. A. decorate   B. celebrate   C. communicate   D. separate

10. A. customer   B. manager   C. engineer   D. cashier

4.1.6.3 Intonation practice

Exercise 6: Choose the correct intonation pattern for each sentence.

1. Are you ready?

A. Rising   B. Falling

2. Where are you going?

A. Rising   B. Falling

3. She's from France.

A. Rising   B. Falling

4. Do you want some coffee?

A. Rising   B. Falling

5. He arrived late.

A. Rising   B. Falling

6. You're coming, aren't you?

A. Rising   B. Falling

7. You're not coming, are you?

A. Rising   B. Falling

8. They live in New York.

A. Rising   B. Falling

9. Is this your phone?

A. Rising   B. Falling

10. He works on weekends.

A. Rising   B. Falling

Exercise 7: Choose the correct intonation pattern for each sentence.

1. Would you mind opening the window?

A. Rising   B. Falling

2. He didn't enjoy the movie, did he?

A. Rising   B. Falling

3. It's quite expensive, isn't it?

A. Rising   B. Falling

4. She lives in Paris, doesn't she?

A. Rising   B. Falling

5. You're not serious, are you?

A. Rising   B. Falling

6. Could you help me with this?

A. Rising   B. Falling

7. He's already left for the airport.

A. Rising   B. Falling

8. They'll meet us at the station.

A. Rising   B. Falling

9. Do you know what time it is?

A. Rising   B. Falling

10. That's the restaurant I mentioned.

A. Rising   B. Falling

4.2 Suggestions for teachers

To effectively address the pronunciation challenges identified among HPU's first-year English majors, instructors should implement a research-backed, systematic approach. The following recommendations include pedagogical rationales, expected outcomes, and practical implementation steps.

4.2.1. Integrate structured pronunciation modules

Rationale: Regular, focused practice combats fossilized errors by keeping pronunciation salient in learners' minds (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

Expected outcomes:

- Improved segmental accuracy (vowel and consonant production).

- Enhanced suprasegmental control (stress, rhythm, intonation).

Implementation:

- Lesson segments (10–15 minutes): Embed into each class a short sequence of drills. For example, Mondays focus on minimal pairs (/θ/ vs. /t/), Wednesdays on word stress patterns (noun vs. verb stress), and Fridays on connected speech (linking /r/ and weak forms).

- Materials: Use laminated IPA charts for quick reference. Incorporate audio-visual tools—like Praat spectrograms—to show students the acoustic differences between their speech and target forms.

4.2.2. Provide regular, targeted feedback

Rationale: Immediate, specific feedback prevents errors from becoming entrenched and reinforces correct production (Saito & Lyster, 2012).

Expected outcomes:

- Faster correction of individual pronunciation errors.

- Increased student confidence as strengths are acknowledged.

Implementation:

- Peer-review workshops: In small groups of three, students record brief dialogues, exchange recordings, and assess each other using a simple 5-point rubric (accuracy of target sound, stress placement, fluency). Rotate roles weekly to build critical listening skills.

- Teacher feedback routines: During speaking activities, teachers pause select students' recordings (live or recorded), highlight one correct feature (e.g., accurate /i:/) and one error (e.g., misplacement of stress), then model the correct pronunciation. Limit to one correction per student to avoid overload.

4.2.3. Leverage technology and resources

Rationale: Technology offers scalable, visual, and auditory feedback that supplements classroom instruction and encourages autonomous learning (Hardison, 2004).

Expected outcomes:

- Continuous, individualized practice outside class.

- Visualization of prosodic features leading to deeper student understanding.

Implementation:

- App integration: Assign weekly tasks on apps like ELSA Speak or Sounds: The pronunciation app, targeting each student's top three error sounds (identified via initial diagnostic test). Review app progress during one-on-one or small-group check-ins.

- Language-lab assignments: Develop lab modules where students practice intonation using pitch-tracking displays. Require submission of lab reports noting improvements in stress timing and pitch range, which the teacher reviews and comments on.

4.2.4. Foster a supportive learning environment

Rationale: Reducing anxiety creates space for risk-taking, which is essential for pronunciation development (Horwitz, 2001).

Expected outcomes:

- Lowered student anxiety and increased willingness to speak.

- Greater classroom participation and peer support.

Implementation:

- Error normalization: Begin each session with a "Pronunciation challenge of the week," where the instructor demonstrates a common error and shares strategies to correct it. Encourage students to share their own struggles.

- Low-anxiety activities: Use icebreaker tasks—such as describing a favorite movie in pairs—before formal presentations. Gradually increase task complexity and audience size as confidence grows.

4.2.5. Encourage extracurricular practice

Rationale: Authentic, real-world use of English complements structured classroom learning and provides meaningful input and output opportunities (Swain, 1985).

Expected outcomes:

- Increased exposure to native-speaker models.

- Reinforcement of classroom pronunciation work through practical use.

Implementation:

- English-only events: Organize monthly "English Café" sessions where students practice in informal settings with volunteer native speakers or senior peers.

- Media shadowing projects: Assign students to select a 1-minute podcast or news clip, transcribe it, and record a shadowing practice. Hold a biweekly "Shadowing Showcase" where volunteers present their recordings for group feedback.

By embedding these detailed strategies—grounded in pronunciation research—into their teaching practices, HPU instructors can create a cohesive program that addresses both the technical and affective dimensions of pronunciation learning.

This balanced approach promises to reduce fossilized errors, enhance learner confidence, and ultimately produce more intelligible, fluent English speakers.

4.3 Conclusion of chapter 4

In response to the pronunciation difficulties identified among first-year English majors at HPU, Chapter 4 has presented an integrated framework of learner-centered and instructor-guided interventions. For students, this framework emphasizes daily engagement with the International Phonetic Alphabet and minimal-pair drills to target the most frequent vowel and consonant errors, supplemented by regular suprasegmental exercises on stress, rhythm, and intonation. Technology-enhanced tools—such as mobile pronunciation applications and language-lab software—offer immediate, visual feedback that accelerates phonetic learning, while structured conversation practice and media shadowing embed authentic speech models into daily study. Moreover, low-pressure speaking tasks and the adoption of SMART pronunciation goals create a supportive environment that mitigates anxiety and fosters sustained motivation.

From the teachers' perspective, embedding concise pronunciation modules into every class ensures that segmental and suprasegmental features remain salient throughout the curriculum. Systematic, targeted feedback—both from peers and instructors—prevents the fossilization of errors and reinforces correct production in real time. The strategic use of digital resources and lab assignments not only deepens students' understanding of prosodic patterns but also encourages autonomous practice beyond the classroom. By normalizing error-making and promoting risk-taking through supportive activities and extracurricular English-only events, instructors can cultivate a learning climate in which students feel empowered to experiment and improve.

By directly aligning each recommendation with the empirical findings of Chapter 3—whether addressing specific phonetic errors, suprasegmental challenges, psychological barriers, or environmental constraints—this chapter has delivered a coherent and evidence-based roadmap tailored to the HPU context. Consistent implementation of these strategies is expected to reduce persistent pronunciation errors, enhance overall intelligibility, and strengthen students' communicative competence. Looking ahead, ongoing monitoring and periodic review of outcomes will be crucial to refine these approaches and ensure that learners achieve lasting gains in pronunciation proficiency.

PART III: CONCLUSION

3.1 Summary of findings

This study systematically explored the persistent challenges first-year English majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology (HPU) face in mastering English pronunciation. Despite extensive prior English education— often spanning five to ten years—fundamental errors in segmental features (such as vowel and consonant production) and suprasegmental elements (including stress, rhythm, and intonation) remained widespread. Several factors were identified as underlying these difficulties: a lack of structured pronunciation instruction, limited exposure to authentic native-speaker input, psychological barriers such as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and significant regional accent interference. These findings corroborate established theories on fossilization, input quality, and the critical period hypothesis, highlighting the necessity of explicit and sustained pronunciation training beyond passive exposure.

3.2 Contributions of the study

This research contributes meaningfully to the field of second language acquisition, particularly within the Vietnamese educational context. It reinforces the growing recognition that adult learners require structured, targeted pronunciation interventions to achieve significant improvement. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of integrating technological tools, guided feedback, and psychologically supportive environments into pronunciation pedagogy. Practically, the study proposes a comprehensive, multi-dimensional framework for pronunciation development, offering students self-directed strategies such as phonetic drills, self-monitoring practices, and technology-assisted learning, while guiding educators in delivering structured modules, targeted feedback, and supportive classroom environments. If applied systematically, these strategies

have the potential not only to enhance individual learner outcomes but also to elevate the overall communicative competence of English majors at HPU.

3.3 Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. It focused solely on first-year students at a single institution, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, data collection primarily relied on self-reported questionnaires and surveys, introducing potential subjectivity. Moreover, the study provided only a cross-sectional snapshot of learners' pronunciation challenges, without tracking their progress over time or after specific interventions.

3.4 Recommendations for future research

Future studies should broaden the participant base to include students from different academic years, other universities, and various regional backgrounds to enhance the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal research observing pronunciation development across multiple semesters after structured intervention would provide deeper insights into the durability and effectiveness of recommended strategies. Experimental designs comparing the effectiveness of various corrective feedback methods—such as teacher feedback, peer feedback, and AI-assisted feedback—also warrant exploration. Additionally, investigating the influence of affective factors, such as learner motivation and anxiety reduction techniques, on pronunciation improvement would enrich the current understanding of pronunciation acquisition.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that while pronunciation learning presents profound challenges, it is far from insurmountable. Through strategic, sustained, and research-informed efforts by both learners and instructors, substantial and lasting progress is achievable. It is hoped that the insights offered here will not only inform pedagogical innovations at HPU but also contribute to the broader

academic conversation about effective second-language pronunciation instruction.

Mastery of pronunciation is not merely about achieving intelligibility—it is about empowering learners to communicate globally with confidence, clarity, and authenticity. As learners refine their voices, they also claim their place on the global stage. The journey toward pronunciation mastery is demanding, but it is a journey worth undertaking—and it begins now.

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH VERSION)

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is part of a research study entitled *"A Study on Difficulties in Learning English Pronunciation Among First-Year English Majors at Hai Phong University of Management and Technology and Some Suggested Solutions."* Your honest responses will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Please put (✓) in the most appropriate box or write your answer where necessary.

Thank you for your cooperation!

1. How long have you been learning English?

□ Less than 5 years

□ 5–7 years

□ 8–10 years

□ More than 10 years

2. How often do you use English outside class (e.g., watching videos, chatting)?

□ Never

□ Rarely

□ Sometimes

□ Often

□ Daily

3. Have you ever been taught pronunciation systematically?

□ Yes, very clearly

□ Yes, but not in detail

□ I don't remeber

□ No, never

4. How would you rate your overall English pronunciation skill?

□ Very poor

□ Poor

□ Average

□ Good

□ Excellent

5. Which pronunciation aspects do you find most challenging? (Check all that apply)

□ Vowel sounds

□ Consonant clusters

□ Word stress

□ Intonation patterns

□ Linking & connected speech

6. Pronunciation is essential for effective English communication.

□ Strongly disagree

□ Disagree

□ Neutral

□ Agree

□ Strongly agree

7. I feel anxious when speaking English because of my pronunciation.

□ Strongly disagree

□ Disagree

□ Neutral

□ Agree

□ Strongly agree

8. Which methods do you use to improve pronunciation? (Check all that apply)

☐ Mobile apps

☐ Self-recording & playback

☐ Teacher feedback

☐ Peer-feedback sessions

9. Which methods do you feel most effective? (Choose up to 2)

☐ Mobile apps

☐ Self-recording & playback

☐ Teacher feedback

☐ Pronunciation drills in class

10. What do you think is the main reason for your pronunciation difficulties?

☐ Lack of phonetic

☐ Limited practice opportunities

☐ Lack of teacher guidance

☐ Interference from Vietmanese

☐ Lack of confidence/fear of speaking

11. What one change (in teaching methods, resources, or environment) would most help you overcome your pronunciation difficulties, and why?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Thân gửi bạn,

Phiếu khảo sát này là một phần trong nghiên cứu mang tên *"Nghiên cứu về những khó khăn trong việc học phát âm tiếng Anh của sinh viên năm nhất chuyên ngành Tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Quản lý và Công nghệ Hải Phòng và một số giải pháp đề xuất."*

Mọi thông tin bạn cung cấp sẽ được giữ bảo mật và chỉ phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu học thuật.

Hãy đánh dấu (✓) vào ô phù hợp nhất hoặc viết câu trả lời nếu được yêu cầu.

Trân trọng cảm ơn sự hợp tác của bạn!

1. Bạn đã học tiếng Anh được bao lâu?

   □ Dưới 5 năm

   □ 5–7 năm

   □ 8–10 năm

   □ Hơn 10 năm

2. Bạn sử dụng tiếng Anh ngoài giờ học (ví dụ: xem video, trò chuyện) với tần suất như thế nào?

   □ Chưa bao giờ

   □ Hiếm khi

   □ Thỉnh thoảng

   □ Thường xuyên

   □ Hàng ngày

3. Bạn đã từng được học phát âm một cách bài bản chưa?

   □ Có, rất rõ ràng

   □ Có, nhưng không chi tiết

□ Tôi không nhớ

□ Chưa bao giờ

4. Bạn đánh giá kỹ năng phát âm tiếng Anh của mình ở mức nào?

□ Rất kém

□ Kém

□ Trung bình

□ Khá

□ Xuất sắc

5. Khía cạnh phát âm nào bạn thấy khó nhất? (Chọn tất cả các phương án phù hợp)

□ Âm nguyên âm

□ Cụm phụ âm

□ Nhấn trọng âm từ

□ Mô hình ngữ điệu

□ Nối âm và nhịp điệu câu

6. Phát âm rất quan trọng đối với giao tiếp tiếng Anh hiệu quả.

□ Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

□ Không đồng ý

□ Trung lập

□ Đồng ý

□ Hoàn toàn đồng ý

7. Tôi cảm thấy lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh vì lo ngại phát âm của mình.

□ Hoàn toàn không đồng ý

□ Không đồng ý

□ Trung lập

□ Đồng ý

□ Hoàn toàn đồng ý

8. Bạn sử dụng những phương pháp nào để cải thiện phát âm? (Chọn tất cả các phương án phù hợp)

□ Ứng dụng di động

□ Tự thu âm và nghe lại

□ Nhận phản hồi từ giáo viên

□ Buổi phản hồi nhóm bạn bè

9. Phương pháp nào bạn thấy hiệu quả nhất? (Chọn tối đa 2)

□ Ứng dụng di động

□ Tự thu âm và nghe lại

□ Phản hồi từ giáo viên

□ Bài tập phát âm trong lớp

10. Theo bạn, nguyên nhân chính gây khó khăn phát âm là gì?

□ Thiếu hướng dẫn về ký hiệu âm vị

□ Thiếu cơ hội thực hành

□ Thiếu hỗ trợ từ giáo viên

□ Ảnh hưởng từ tiếng Việt

□ Thiếu tự tin / sợ nói

11. Theo bạn, thay đổi duy nhất nào (về phương pháp giảng dạy, tài nguyên hoặc môi trường) sẽ giúp bạn khắc phục khó khăn phát âm, và vì sao?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

XIN CHÂN THÀNH CẢM ƠN SỰ HỢP TÁC CỦA BẠN!

APPENDIX 3:
KEYS TO PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE EXERCISES

Exercise 1:

1. C. live

2. B. bit

3. B. feel

4. D. lick

5. B. feel

6. A. bad

7. A. knack

8. B. tap

9. D. said

10. D. shame

11. A. banana

12. A. sugar

13. B. capable

14. A. repair

15. D. port

16. D. sheep

17. C. pen

18. B. team

19. C. tide

20. D. Sew

Exercise 2:

1. D. leak

2. C. meaningful

3. A. mat

4. D. pan

5. A. account

6. A. support

7. C. pool

8. D. beer

9. D. died

10. C. tear

11. A. ship

12. A. she

13. A. repair

14. D. chip

15. A. said

16. B. capable

17. C. tight

18. B. show

19. A. banana

20. B. leave

Exercise 3:

1. B. flee

2. A. evening

3. D. nap

4. D. bachelor

5. A. radar

6. B. agenda

7. B. patron

8. B. blight

9. B. dine

10. B. doll

11. A. sore

12. B. sun

13. B. sofa

14. B. base

15. B. tide

16. C. see

17. D. passion

18. C. reap

19. D. tight

20. B. sew

Exercise 4:

1. C. arrive

2. D. visit

3. A. develop

4. C. reason

5. B. honest

6. C. describe

7. C. engine

8. C. answer

9. C. hotel

10. C. control

Exercise 5:

1. C. industry

2. A. photograph

3. B. biology

4. C. important

5. D. family

6. B. strategy

7. C. open

8. D. sensitive

9. C. communicate

10. C. engineer

Exercise 6:

1. A. Rising

2. B. Falling

3. B. Falling

4. A. Rising

5. B. Falling

6. B. Falling

7. A. Rising

8. B. Falling

9. A. Rising

10. B. Falling

Exercise 7:

1. B. Falling

2. A. Rising

3. B. Falling

4. B. Falling

5. B. Falling

6. B. Falling

7. B. Falling

8. B. Falling

9. B. Falling

10. B. Falling