

# THE CURRENT SITUATION AND SOME PROPOSALS SOLUTIONS OUTSIDE CLASS TO PRACTISE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL FOR STUDENTS AT TAN TRAO UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

English has become an essential international language in education, employment, and global integration. Among the four language skills, speaking is widely regarded as the most important for effective communication, yet it remains the most challenging skill for many Vietnamese students. This study investigates the current situation of English speaking practice among students at Tan Trao University, identifies key factors affecting their speaking performance, and proposes practical solutions for practising speaking skills outside the classroom.

A quantitative research method was employed, using questionnaires distributed to 160 students from different majors at Tan Trao University. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine students' self-assessment of speaking ability, classroom practice opportunities, and influencing factors. The findings reveal that most students perceive speaking as the most difficult skill, with limited classroom time allocated to speaking activities. Major influencing factors include low learning motivation, insufficient language knowledge, large class sizes, and teaching methods that emphasize grammar and examinations.

Based on these findings, the study proposes several practical out-of-class activities such as joining English clubs, participating in online speaking forums, and engaging in real-life communication contexts to enhance students' English speaking competence. The study contributes practical implications for teachers and students in improving English speaking skills at Tan Trao University and similar educational contexts.

## THỰC TRẠNG VÀ MỘT SỐ GIẢI PHÁP ĐỂ XUẤT NGOÀI LỚP HỌC NHẰM RÈN LUYỆN KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TÂN TRÀO

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## THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO

**Ngày nhận bài:** 11/11/2025 Tiếng Anh đã trở thành một ngôn ngữ quốc tế thiết yếu trong giáo

**Ngày hoàn thiện:** 12/12/2025 dục, nghề nghiệp và hội nhập toàn cầu. Trong bốn kỹ năng ngôn

**Ngày đăng:** 28/12/2025 ngữ, kỹ năng nói được xem là quan trọng nhất đối với giao tiếp, tuy

## TỪ KHÓA

Giải pháp;

## TÓM TẮT

nhiên đây vẫn là kỹ năng khó khăn nhất đối với nhiều sinh viên

Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát thực trạng việc rèn luyện kỹ

Thực tế;  
Kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh;  
Hoạt động thực tiễn;  
Ngoài lớp học.

năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên Trường Đại học Tân Trào, xác định các yếu tố chính ảnh hưởng đến khả năng nói của sinh viên, đồng thời đề xuất các giải pháp thực tiễn nhằm luyện tập kỹ năng nói. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định lượng thông qua bảng hỏi được phát cho 160 sinh viên thuộc các ngành khác nhau của Trường Đại học Tân Trào. Dữ liệu thu thập được phân tích bằng thống kê mô tả để xem xét mức độ tự đánh giá khả năng nói của sinh viên, cơ hội thực hành nói trên lớp và các yếu tố tác động. Kết quả cho thấy đa số sinh viên cho rằng kỹ năng nói là kỹ năng khó nhất, trong khi thời lượng dành cho các hoạt động nói trên lớp còn hạn chế. Các yếu tố ảnh hưởng chính bao gồm động cơ học tập thấp, kiến thức ngôn ngữ chưa đầy đủ, sĩ số lớp học đông và phương pháp giảng dạy còn thiên về ngữ pháp và thi cử. Dựa trên những kết quả này, nghiên cứu đề xuất một số hoạt động thực tiễn ngoài lớp học như tham gia các câu lạc bộ tiếng Anh, diễn đàn nói tiếng Anh trực tuyến và giao tiếp trong các bối cảnh thực tế nhằm nâng cao năng lực nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên. Nghiên cứu mang lại những ý nghĩa thực tiễn cho giảng viên và sinh viên trong việc cải thiện kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh tại Trường Đại học Tân Trào cũng như trong các bối cảnh giáo dục tương tự.

## 1. Introduction

Education is one of the most important fields, receiving significant attention and investment from the Party, the State, and society at all levels of the education system, including English training for students. The Government and the Ministry of Education and Training have implemented various solutions to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning across schools and educational institutions in Viet Nam, especially at colleges and universities. Foreign language education is being strongly invested in with the goal that students “graduate from secondary schools, colleges, and universities with sufficient foreign language competence to use independently and confidently in communication, study, and work in an integrated, multilingual, and multicultural environment; turning foreign languages into a strength of the Vietnamese people to serve the nation’s industrialization and modernization” (Prime Minister, 2008).

Linguist Khamkhien (2010) states that speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning a foreign language, including English. According to Bygate (1987), speaking is a reflexive skill that helps learners use a foreign language to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings to their listeners. Therefore, speaking plays a crucial role in enabling English to fulfill its communicative function. Moreover, speaking skills support the development of listening skills, help expand vocabulary, and reinforce related skills.

Many Vietnamese students, including those at Tan Trao University, wish to study and practice extensively to enhance their speaking skills, as these skills are vital for future academic and professional success. However, Vietnamese students in general, and students at Tan Trao University in particular, still encounter many difficulties in learning English, especially in practicing speaking skills for real communication.

This article examines the current situation of English-speaking skills among students at Tan

Trao University and proposes several self-study activities that they can apply outside the classroom to improve their speaking performance.

## 2. Literature review

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most important yet challenging skills in foreign language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Recent studies emphasize that speaking ability is a key indicator of learners' overall communicative competence and practical language use (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Unlike receptive skills, speaking requires learners to produce language in real time, integrating multiple linguistic and cognitive processes simultaneously.

Research conducted after 2015 highlights that EFL learners often encounter both psychological and linguistic barriers when practising speaking skills. According to Juhana (2012), lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and limited opportunities for authentic interaction significantly reduce students' willingness to speak in English. These affective factors are particularly evident in Asian learning contexts, where students tend to be passive and reluctant to express ideas orally due to cultural and educational traditions.

From a linguistic perspective, effective speaking requires the integration of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and pragmatic competence. Thornbury & Scott (2000) argue that speaking development is a complex process that demands systematic practice and meaningful interaction. Without sufficient lexical resources and grammatical control, learners struggle to express ideas clearly and confidently, which further discourages active participation in speaking activities.

In terms of teaching methodology, recent research strongly supports communicative and learner-centered approaches in developing speaking skills. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are widely recognized as effective frameworks for creating meaningful speaking opportunities in EFL classrooms (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 1984). These approaches emphasize interaction, real-life communication tasks, and student engagement rather than rote learning of grammatical structures.

However, several recent studies conducted in Vietnam indicate that English teaching at the tertiary level remains largely examination-oriented, with a strong focus on grammar, reading, and vocabulary acquisition. As a result, students have limited exposure to communicative speaking activities, and classroom time is insufficient to meet learners' speaking needs. Therefore, many scholars argue that promoting out-of-class speaking practice is an effective strategy to compensate for limited classroom interaction and to enhance learners' communicative competence in authentic contexts (Wongsuwana, 2006).

## 3. Research methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the current situation of English speaking practice among students at Tan Trao University.

### 3.2. Participants

The participants consisted of 160 students (80 males, 80 females) from different majors at Tan Trao University, including first-, second-, and third-year students. After removing 10 invalid

questionnaires, 150 responses were used for data analysis.

### 3.3. Research Instrument

A questionnaire was designed to collect data on:

- Students' self-assessment of English speaking ability
- Perceived difficulty of English language skills
- Time allocation for speaking activities in class
- Factors affecting students' speaking practice

The questionnaire included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions to ensure clarity and reliability.

### 3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaires were distributed in May 2025 after students completed their English courses in the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. The collected data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to calculate percentages and present results in tables and figures.

## 4. Research results and discussion

### 4.1. Current situation of speaking skills among students at Tan Trao University

This study employed quantitative research methods, collecting data through questionnaires to investigate the speaking skills of students at Tan Trao University. A total of 160 students from various majors were randomly surveyed. The content of the questionnaire was designed to clearly and accurately identify the current situation of English-speaking practice among students at Tan Trao University. The questions were detailed and easy to understand, enabling students to provide accurate responses regarding: their self-assessment of speaking skills, the amount of practice time in class and outside the classroom, and the types of activities that lecturers organized to give students opportunities to practice speaking. The questionnaire also explored the causes and factors affecting the development of students' speaking skills.

The questionnaires were distributed in May 2025, after the students had completed English courses in the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Most respondents were first-, second-, and third-year students. After collection, invalid or incomplete questionnaires were removed (10 forms were eliminated). The remaining data were processed using Excel to calculate percentages and generate relevant charts.

The survey results indicate the following:

#### Assessment of the difficulty level of English speaking skills among students at Tan Trao University:

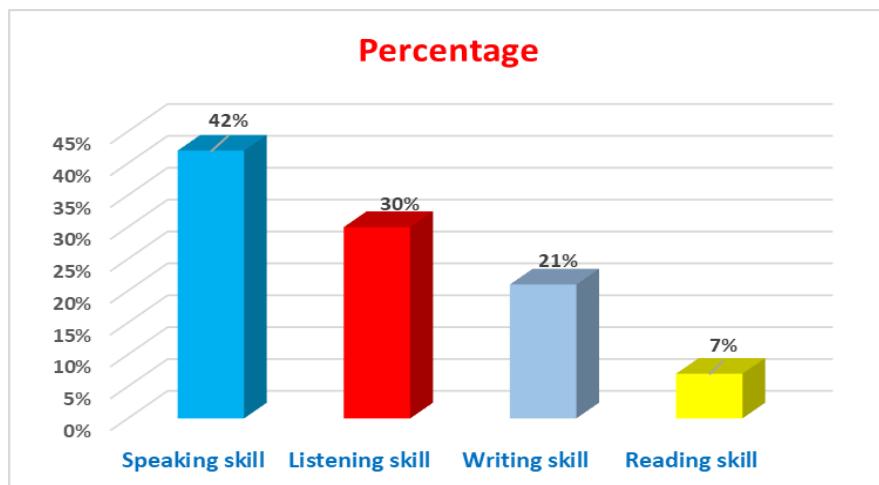
According to Figure 1, 42% of surveyed students reported that speaking was the most difficult skill for them, followed by listening (30%), writing (21%), and reading (7%).

There are many reasons why students consider speaking skills the most difficult to master, such as having a limited vocabulary base, lacking flexibility in using grammar, and not practicing regularly. Speaking is also a skill that students find challenging to evaluate on their own because it does not have clear, definitive answers like listening, reading, or writing. To recognize improvement, students must undergo a long and consistent period of practice.

Regarding the English-speaking ability of students at Tan Trao University, the survey results show that when asked to self-assess their speaking skills, 21% of the respondents admitted that they could not speak English, 51% rated their speaking ability as weak, and only 28% believed that they

had an acceptable level of speaking competence.

**Figure 1. Assessment of the difficulty level of 4 skills: Listening - Speaking - Reading - Writing English**



**Table 1. English-speaking ability of students at Tan Trao University**

Speaking Ability Level	Percentage
Cannot speak	21%
Weak speaking skill	51%
Average speaking skill	13%
Fair speaking skill	10%
Good speaking skill	5%

This situation is concerning because English-speaking skills play an important role in learning. At present, Tan Trao University is gradually introducing several courses and programs taught in English in accordance with advanced educational standards. Moreover, strong English-speaking skills are highly beneficial for students in daily communication and in seeking good employment opportunities at large companies and multinational corporations operating in Viet Nam. English-speaking proficiency is increasingly regarded as an essential tool for effective work performance.

#### **Some reasons leading to the weak speaking skills of students at Tan Trao University**

The amount of time allocated to speaking activities in English classes is also a matter of concern. The survey results indicate that lecturers have not prioritized interactive learning activities that encourage students to practice speaking. Instead, classroom activities tend to focus heavily on grammar explanations and exercises, as well as reading skills, these activities occur very frequently and account for 45% of classroom time. Translation tasks, vocabulary learning, and listening skills are also emphasized (frequently, accounting for 33% of class time). In contrast, speaking and writing skills receive significantly less attention, appearing only occasionally and occupying just 13% and 9% of classroom time, respectively (table 2).

**Table 2. Time allocation for activities in some English classes  
of students at Tan Trao University**

Activity	Percentage
Grammar	25%
Reading	20%
Vocabulary	18%
Listening	15%
Speaking	13%
Writing	9%

This presents a significant challenge for students at Tan Trao University who wish to enhance their speaking skills. Many students express that the time allocated for practicing speaking is insufficient. They request that instructors allocate more time during class to facilitate speaking practice. The limited time dedicated to speaking skills poses a considerable obstacle, as teachers often struggle to organize numerous activities that allow students to practice and present in front of their peers.

Despite the constraints, most teachers have made efforts to implement various group activities, pair work, presentations, games, and individual speaking tasks. However, the effectiveness of these activities varies across different classes, as revealed by a survey of students. Out of 150 respondents, 100 students (66.7%) reported that teachers organized such activities only 3 to 5 times throughout the course. In contrast, only 30 students (20%) noted that these activities occurred more than five times, while 20 students (13.3%) indicated they did not participate in any such activities during class.

The data highlights an inconsistency in the attention and investment teachers give to developing speaking skills in classes at Tan Trao University. Several factors contribute to this unevenness:

- The varying levels of English proficiency among students necessitate that instructors allocate significant time to teaching grammar and vocabulary, particularly in lower-level classes.
- The large class sizes make it challenging to facilitate speaking skill training activities effectively.
- The curriculum does not prioritize speaking skills adequately.
- Assessment methods tend to emphasize vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension over speaking abilities, with midterm and final exams typically consisting of objective tests.
- The limited time available for the subject contrasts sharply with the extensive content that needs to be covered.

Furthermore, the number of students in each English class significantly affects the quality of learning and opportunities for practicing speaking skills. The survey indicated that 90% of students felt that classes, which often consist of 45-50 students, are overcrowded, resulting in fewer opportunities for individual practice. This environment also makes it difficult for teachers to observe,

guide, and provide feedback to all students effectively. Only 10% of the surveyed students reported that they could thrive in such crowded classroom settings.

At Tan Trao University, students majoring in primary typically place less emphasis on practicing speaking skills. A notable 87% of surveyed students acknowledged that they primarily concentrate on mastering vocabulary and grammar to excel in class tasks and final examinations. The frequent use of Vietnamese in class and the scarcity of opportunities to engage with English in everyday life further diminish students' confidence and hinder the development of their speaking skills. The survey revealed that 120 students (80%) indicated that both teachers and students often resort to Vietnamese during English classes, particularly for grammar instruction and vocabulary translation. Additionally, outside of English class, students seldom have the chance to communicate in English. Therefore, creating an effective English practice environment, where English is predominantly used for communication, instruction, and discussion, would encourage students to speak actively to articulate their ideas effectively.

#### ***4.2. Factors Affecting the Speaking Skills of Students at Tan Trao University***

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain argue that speaking skills are among the most challenging to acquire, as they require learners to integrate various complementary skills such as vocabulary, word choice, grammar, and social knowledge relevant to the topic at hand. Consequently, numerous factors influence the learning and practice of speaking skills among students at Tan Trao University. Many researchers and educators have published articles, research papers, and books addressing the challenges and impacts on foreign language learning, particularly concerning speaking skills. These challenges can be categorized into three primary groups:

##### ***4.2.1. Motivation to learn***

Aftat posits that motivation is a crucial factor leading to success in both teaching and learning processes. Students who recognize the importance of speaking skills tend to exert more effort in studying and practicing, overcoming difficulties, and actively engaging in teacher-organized activities, thereby improving their overall foreign language proficiency, especially in English communication.

However, many students at Tan Trao University do not prioritize speaking practice; instead, they often focus on grammar to meet examination requirements. Survey results indicate that only 13% of students dedicate time to practicing speaking skills in English. Among these students, most participate only in classroom speaking activities or engage in basic dialogues and short speeches with peers, lacking commitment to further practice outside of class. Consequently, students often prioritize short-term goals, such as passing tests, over long-term objectives like enhancing their English speaking skills for future academic and professional use. This focus on immediate results poses significant challenges for students.

Additionally, students with limited vocabulary and ineffective study methods may gradually lose their passion for learning to speak, leading to neglect of their studies, passivity in class, and a lack of motivation to practice. Many express feelings of boredom regarding English, particularly in speaking and communication. This indifference, stemming from low motivation, often results in students self-assessing their foreign language abilities as poor, which further discourages them from using English in both academic and daily contexts. Therefore, fostering motivation and facilitating speaking practice at Tan Trao University is crucial, requiring attention not only from students but

also from teachers, who should create engaging and meaningful classroom experiences.

#### *4.2.2. Language knowledge*

Effective communication and training require learners to possess a robust vocabulary, strong listening skills, and an understanding of appropriate grammatical structures. Without a solid vocabulary foundation, effective listening abilities, and a grasp of grammar, the process of learning and practicing speaking skills becomes significantly more challenging. Vocabulary enables speakers to convey their thoughts accurately, while grammar shapes sentence construction during verbal communication, ensuring clarity and effectiveness. Furthermore, grammar allows students to express complex meanings without lengthy explanations.

Students at Tan Trao University, particularly those in technical fields, often struggle with vocabulary and grammar, as their academic background leans towards subjects like Math, Physics, and Chemistry. This leads to limited interest in language aspects and a lack of confidence in speaking practice. The predominantly male engineering classes also exhibit lower enthusiasm for practicing speaking skills than anticipated.

#### *4.2.3. Teaching methods*

In addition to motivation and language knowledge, the teaching methods employed by instructors in English classes significantly impact students' skill development. Educators equipped with pedagogical knowledge and effective teaching strategies can positively influence the learning of speaking skills. Various teaching methodologies, such as Communicative Language Teaching, the Direct Method, Task-Based Language Teaching, and Learner-Centered Approaches, have their respective advantages. However, the choice of method, timing, and activities to maximize effectiveness is a nuanced aspect of teaching.

Effective teaching methods and well-structured activities in English classes provide valuable opportunities for students to practice their speaking skills. According to Harmer (1998), engaging speaking activities not only enhance skill acquisition but also foster motivation and interest in learning.

### *4.3. Some solutions for practice activities outside the classroom*

Speaking skills are essential among the four core language competencies that learners must not overlook. Therefore, encouraging English teachers to prioritize the development of speaking skills while simultaneously motivating students to invest time and effort in this area presents a significant challenge, not only for Tan Trao University but for all educational institutions. Skinner argues that language teaching should provide students with experiential learning opportunities in meaningful contexts. This approach emphasizes the importance of not only understanding concepts but also applying them in real-life situations.

English teachers should facilitate a variety of practice topics, such as self-introductions, discussing friends and family, making phone calls, and expressing gratitude, through organized classroom activities. The survey indicates that common activities at Tan Trao University include group work, pair practice, games, presentations, and conversation exercises. Such activities are likely to enhance student engagement and provide practical speaking opportunities.

However, practicing English speaking skills at Tan Trao University faces challenges and cannot rely solely on limited classroom time (typically 45 to 60 periods per semester, depending on the major and level of study). Students must take initiative in self-study and practice according to

their individual capacities and schedules, with guidance from teachers. Brown (2001) suggests several strategies for optimizing class time to encourage independent learning and practice:

- Utilize class time for guidance and interaction with students.
- Avoid using class time for activities that can be completed at home.
- Reduce the emphasis on examinations and highlight the importance of competencies.
- Promote learning strategies and practice outside of class.
- Provide additional opportunities for study and practice beyond the classroom.
- Establish clubs and regular, meaningful activities.

Moreover, Wongsuwana emphasizes that speaking skills can be improved through consistent practice, which is not solely dependent on innate talent. The methods of practice and engagement will determine the progress students make, requiring time for gradual accumulation of skills through classroom interactions and independent practice.

To enhance speaking skills outside the classroom, we recommend several effective activities for students:

- **Join an English club:** Many English clubs in Ho Chi Minh City, organized by universities, language centers, and student associations, provide welcoming environments for students to practice English through discussions on relatable topics suitable for various proficiency levels.
- **Attend English-speaking coffee shops:** These venues offer friendly, vibrant spaces for students to socialize and practice English in casual settings. The language used is typically conversational, allowing students to engage without the pressure of formal academic topics.
- **Engage in practical communication in public places:** Students can visit tourist attractions and city centers to converse with international visitors. This "free class" is highly effective for practicing language skills in spontaneous situations, although students must be prepared with vocabulary and knowledge about Vietnamese culture to facilitate discussions.
- **Participate in online forums:** Engaging with peers in English-speaking forums allows students to overcome anxiety associated with direct practice while sharing experiences and learning strategies with students worldwide.
- **Utilize language practice software and websites:** Students can log into free platforms to practice with peers and instructors, making use of flexible and accessible resources for skill development. These platforms often provide guided practice topics tailored to students' abilities.

By integrating these activities into their routines, students at Tan Trao University can enhance their speaking skills, increase their confidence, and develop a more profound appreciation for the English language.

## 5. Conclusions

Teaching practices demonstrate that all English skills, particularly speaking skills, require consistent and long-term practice to yield significant results for learners. It is essential to recognize that no one learns a foreign language without making mistakes; therefore, students must cultivate confidence and patience to engage in communication both in the classroom and, importantly, in real-life situations. This extensive practice is crucial for enhancing their foreign language proficiency.

Through the process of practicing and learning, students will gradually improve their language abilities, expand their vocabulary, and self-correct fundamental errors, thereby refining their English speaking skills over time. This ongoing practice should be guided and supported by teachers and must be conducted regularly, as speaking skills are vital not only for students at Tan Trao University but also for succeeding in job interviews and professional environments after

Nonetheless, the limited time available for in-class practice poses a significant challenge for students. Therefore, participating in extracurricular activities that promote speaking practice is both beneficial and necessary for their development.

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