

Research Article

Exploring Factors Affecting Public Speaking Performance of English-Majored Students at Ton Duc Thang University

Minh Tuan Truong¹, Tam My Tran^{1*}

¹Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ton Duc Thang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

This research paper aims to investigate the various factors that influence the public speaking performance of English-majored students at Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU). The study explores and analyzes the specific elements that impact students' abilities in public speaking, providing valuable insights and recommendations to enhance their public speaking skills. The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including a survey and interviews, to gather data from a sample of 122 junior and senior English-majored students enrolled in the Standard or High-quality program at TDTU. The findings of this study shed light on the psychological, linguistic, and instructional factors that contribute to students' public speaking performance. The results indicate that factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, language proficiency, and the quality of instructional support play a significant role in shaping students' public speaking abilities. The study offers practical strategies and recommendations to address these challenges, ultimately aiming to improve the public speaking competence of English-majored students at TDTU. The insights gained from this research are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing public speaking performance and to provide the academic community with practical solutions for enhancing students' public speaking skills, which are crucial for their academic and professional success.

Keywords

Public Speaking; Factors Affecting, Speaking Performance; English-majored Students.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Communication involves sharing thoughts and ideas through spoken words and gestures (Azhar et al., 2015). English is the most spoken language globally. It is becoming an emerging primary language, with many countries adopting it

as their second language (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). International institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization use English for communication, negotiation, and compliance (Phinyadechasin & Porkaew, 2014). English has become a global language, with some nations designating it as an official or secondary language. Vietnam adopted English as their first choice second language after the Đổi Mới policy in 1986 and lifting the American trade embargo in 1994 (Van Van,

*Corresponding author: Minh Tuan Truong

Email addresses: truongtuanminh@tdtu.edu.vn

Received: 20/09/2024; Accepted: 01/11/2022; Published: 01/12/2024



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2020). The number of undergraduates and graduates enrolling in English has increased, with 94-96% enrolling in English (Van Van, 2020).

Public speaking is crucial for effective communication and professional success in various fields. In Vietnam, students develop four fundamental English skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – from primary school to university (Dang et al., 2022). Effective public speaking skills are essential for English majors, but many face challenges developing and demonstrating solid abilities. Factors affecting public speaking abilities include psychological, linguistic, and instructional factors (Manurung & Izar, 2019).

This research aims to understand better the factors influencing students' public speaking abilities and offer practical strategies to improve their skills.

1.2 The Purpose of the Research

This research paper primarily examines the factors that affect the public speaking performance of English-major students at Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU). The focus is identifying and analyzing the key elements influencing students' public speaking abilities.

1.3 The Significance of the Study

The research aims to understand the factors affecting the public speaking performance of English-major students at TDTU, particularly in their junior and senior years. The study aims to provide recommendations for improving students' abilities, highlighting potential areas for improvement, and benefiting students and the academic community by proposing practical solutions to enhance public speaking competence.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study examines the factors affecting the public speaking skills of English-majored students at TDTU, focusing on juniors and seniors. A convenience sampling method will be used, with 122 respondents selected based on their completion of Speaking 1-4 and Public Speaking courses. The study aims to gather insights from students with experience in group and individual speaking exercises, who are likely to have a well-developed awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in public speaking, providing valuable perspectives for the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Key Terms

2.1.1. Definition of Public Speaking

Public speaking involves delivering informative, persuasive, or entertaining messages to large audiences through speeches or lectures (Sugiyati & Indriani, 2021). Its primary purpose is to inform, influence, or entertain. A successful speech should leave a lasting impact, providing valuable insights (Dansieh et al., 2021). Public speaking allows individuals to engage with their communities, share ideas, and address societal issues. Speaking out will enable individuals to create change and contribute to positive outcomes, regardless of the impact size. It provides a platform for self-expression and personal influence on meaningful causes (Lucas & Stob, 2020).

2.1.2. The Differences Between Public Speaking and Conversation

Public speaking is distinct from casual conversation, an informal form of communication used to build and maintain social relationships (Thornbury, 2006). It involves a one-way communication flow, with the speaker delivering a message using a formal presentation style and specific techniques. The speaker is more responsible for public speaking, crafting and presenting their message while receiving subtle feedback (Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen & Lease-Gubrud, 2024). Three primary differences between public speaking and conversation include structure, language, and delivery.

Structure: Public speaking is a time-bound activity requiring meticulous planning and preparation. Speakers must organize their thoughts and content to deliver their message within the allotted time, unlike the free-flowing nature of the conversation. Josh Shipp's year-long TEDxTalk exemplifies the level of planning required to craft a meaningful speech.

Language: Public speaking requires formal, precise language, avoiding slang, jargon, and poor grammar. It's crucial for classroom presentations, TED Talks, and famous speeches like Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream." Informal language can negatively impact audiences, choosing words essential in formal settings.

Delivery: Public speech delivery differs significantly from casual conversation, where speakers may speak softly, use filler words, and maintain a relaxed posture. Effective public speakers adjust tone and pace, maintain an upright posture, and avoid distracting habits to ensure clarity, engage the audience, and ensure the message is understood.

Acknowledging formal structure, language, and delivery techniques is crucial for public speaking success, as it enhances audience engagement and engagement.

2.1.3. Types of Public Speaking

Informative Speech

Informative speeches are a popular type of public speaking among students to enhance the audience's understanding of a subject (Lucas & Stob, 2020). They aim to provide new

insights and facts, introduce different perspectives, and increase awareness of important issues. The main focus is not to promote particular viewpoints or trends but to broaden the audience's comprehension of the topic (Mapes, 2019).

Persuasive Speech

Persuasive speeches aim to influence, strengthen, or alter the audience's beliefs or behaviors, unlike informative speeches focusing on delivering knowledge (Lucas & Stob, 2020). They often involve addressing public controversies and advocating for a particular stance, aiming to persuade the audience to adopt that perspective (Mapes, 2019). This presents a significant challenge for speakers, as they must effectively engage the audience's emotions and reasoning. The success of a persuasive speech is typically measured by the audience's readiness to act on the beliefs or ideas presented.

Ceremonial Speech

This paper discusses ceremonial speeches, typically delivered during formal events or rituals, following specific protocols and etiquette (Wrench et al., 2011). They aim to foster engagement and facilitate responses related to the occasion (Nguyen & Tong, 2024). Ceremonial speeches can be categorized into four types: introductory speeches, presentation speeches, acceptance speeches, and commemorative speeches. These speeches unite the audience and require the speaker to present a viewpoint that fits the event's context. The paper does not explicitly focus on education and career ceremonies (Lucas & Stob, 2020; Nguyen & Tong, 2024).

2.2. Factors Affecting Public Speaking Performance

In his study, Viwattanabunchong (2017) identifies several factors, such as English oral proficiency, personality, topic familiarity, pronunciation, teacher's scoring criteria, and grammar, that significantly affect public speaking, particularly in the context of English language learners. These factors are crucial in shaping how effectively a speaker communicates and how they are evaluated in public speaking scenarios. According to Tran & Dang (2019), public speaking can be significantly impacted by affective difficulties such as fear of making mistakes, shyness, loss of self-confidence, and anxiety, all of which can hinder a speaker's ability to communicate effectively. Social, instructional, and linguistic difficulties—ranging from audience interaction to language barriers—also pose challenges that can affect a speaker's performance and clarity. Suchona & Shorna (2019) highlight that factors such as a lack of motivation, crowded classrooms, and learners' anxiety can create significant barriers to effective public speaking. Furthermore, fear of losing face, fear of criticism, and concerns about making mistakes, along with a limited vocabulary, can further hinder a speaker's confidence and performance. Chau et al., (2022) highlight that public speaking is

influenced by psychological factors such as anxiety, motivation, and attitude, alongside external affective factors like the learning environment, lack of practical exercises, and instructional difficulties.

Manurung & Izar, (2019) identify internal and external factors that affect public speaking, with internal factors such as a lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, fear of criticism, and insufficient practice impacting a speaker's performance. External factors, including the lecturer's teaching methods, the curriculum, the learning environment, and the availability of extracurricular activities, also play a significant role in shaping a learner's ability to succeed in public speaking. Zhang et al., (2020) argue that self-efficacy, speech preparation, and practice are essential to successful public speaking, as they boost a speaker's confidence, ensure a well-structured presentation, and reduce anxiety. Sugiyati & Indriani (2021) highlight that communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and comfort in speaking English can significantly affect a speaker's ability to perform effectively in public speaking situations. Ly, (2021) suggests that public speaking is influenced by internal factors such as overuse of the first language, weak listening and pronunciation skills, lack of topic knowledge, shyness, and fear of mistakes or criticism, as well as external factors like limited practice time, the content of topics, IELTS-oriented speaking tests, and the level of support from lecturers.

2.2.1. Psychological Factors

Anxiety, Shyness, And Lack of Motivation

Anxiety has become a growing concern in colleges and universities (Tan et al., 2023), as it arises when a situation is perceived as threatening, leading to an unpleasant emotional response (van der Ploeg, 1984). Anxiety is a mental state focused on the future, anticipating and preparing for potential adverse events. Situation-specific anxiety is triggered by a particular event or circumstance, such as delivering a public speech in a classroom setting (Ellis, 1997). Research by Viwattanabunchong (2017) identifies four stages of public speaking anxiety: pre-preparation anxiety, preparation anxiety, pre-performance anxiety, and performance anxiety, which encompasses the actual delivery of the speech. This highlights the importance of addressing anxiety in educational settings.

Studies in Vietnam show that anxiety significantly impacts students' English-speaking abilities. 73% of students worry about making mistakes, while 72.5% believe psychological factors significantly hinder their skills. These findings highlight the pervasive influence of anxiety and psychological barriers on students' ability to communicate effectively in English. Research by Thanh (2021) and Dang et al., (2022) highlights the need for effective strategies to address anxiety and improve English speaking skills.

Dang et al., (2022) and Dansieh et al., (2021) found that shyness is a common phobia among students, leading to a lack of clarity and fear of forgetting what to say. The study also revealed that 53% of participants attribute their fear of public speaking to their natural shyness, indicating that shyness significantly contributes to the fear and anxiety associated with public speaking.

Motivation is crucial in second language acquisition, impacting learners' communication ability in public. It influences focus, energy, and persistence (Dang et al., 2022). Low self-esteem can hinder public speaking skills development, and students need more confidence in English communication (Chau et al., 2022). Motivation drives effort and persistence, while self-esteem shapes confidence and willingness to speak, especially in a second language like English.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a cognitive factor that influences thoughts, emotions, actions, and self-regulation through cognitive, motivational, affective, and selective processes. It is an individual's confidence in their ability to succeed in a specific situation. Bandura (1997) identified four sources contributing to self-efficacy development: active mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, physiological and affective states, and stress and anxiety. These sources shape how individuals perceive and approach tasks, affecting their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses. Zhang et al., (2020) found that students' self-efficacy increased significantly in English public speaking over a semester but dropped during persuasive speeches, suggesting that the difficulty of the speech significantly affects self-efficacy.

2.2.2. Linguistic Factors

Pronunciation

Dang et al., (2022) point out that English pronunciation involves segmental and suprasegmental aspects, including vowels and consonants. Vowel sounds can be short or long, and diphthongs combine two vowel sounds. Vietnamese learners often struggle to pronounce English final sounds or consonants, leading to omissions, schwa additions, or substitutions closer to Vietnamese sounds. They also need help pronouncing ending sounds in plural forms of words and past forms of regular verbs due to a need for knowledge of pronunciation rules. Vietnamese speakers often confuse sounds like /s/ and /ʃ/ (Ha, 2005).

Effective pronunciation relies on suffixes like linking, intonation, and word stress. Linking connects the last sound of one word to the first sound of the next, allowing for seamless speech flow. Intonation, the language's melody, involves the voice's rise and fall based on context and meaning (Burns &

Claire, 2003). For English majors, intonation constitutes about one-tenth of the pronunciation course, accounting for around 5% of the overall curriculum (Dang et al., 2022). Word stress emphasizes certain words in an utterance through louder volume, longer vowel duration, or higher pitch. Native English speakers instinctively apply word stress to highlight critical information or express nuances in their speech (Burns & Claire, 2003).

Vocabulary

Language learning requires students to enhance their Vocabulary to reduce communication difficulties (Liu & Jackson, 2011). They should choose topics with rich Vocabulary, but avoid using overly specific language when faced with challenging topics. A survey by Le (2019) found that 44% of students identified a lack of Vocabulary as a significant factor contributing to speaking difficulties. Therefore, expanding and strengthening vocabulary skills is crucial for students to express themselves confidently and accurately in English conversations.

Grammar

Grammar is a set of rules in a language that govern the transformation of words and their combination into sentences (Harmer, 2004). It is an invisible force that guides us when constructing sentences. Despite developing an awareness of a language's grammar, 37.5% of participants demonstrate strong writing skills with proficient use of grammar in essays, but tend to use simple sentences when speaking. This suggests a discrepancy between writing and speaking abilities regarding grammatical complexity (Dang et al., 2022). Grammar also influences public speaking performance across all four stages of public speaking anxiety. Understanding and mastering grammar is vital for effective communication, as it empowers individuals to express themselves accurately and confidently in spoken and written language.

2.2.3. Instructional Factors

In non-Western classrooms, teachers often use an oration approach, with students listening attentively and taking notes quietly. Class discussions are infrequent, and interrupting the teacher is discouraged (Tran & Dang, 2019). Previous studies have found no significant correlation between instructional factors and students' speaking performance (Tran & Dang, 2019). This research aims to gather data for this sample pool to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of instructional factors on students' speaking performance, contributing to the existing knowledge in language education.

2.3. Research Questions

1. What are the common factors affecting the speaking performance of English-majored students at Ton Duc Thang University?

2. How do English-major students at Ton Duc Thang University overcome public speaking challenges?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Site

The study was conducted at TDTU, a reputable institution in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, specifically the Faculty of Foreign Languages, which offers both standard and high-quality English programs, to investigate factors affecting public speaking performance among English-majored students.

3.2. Research Design

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study explores the factors influencing public speaking performance among English-major students at TDTU. Using a five-point Likert scale and open-ended questions, the researcher used questionnaires to gather data on students' perspectives on these factors. Interviews were also used to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences and strategies. The combination of survey and interview data allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the factors affecting public speaking performance, ensuring the research findings are robust and well-rounded. The research's conclusions thoroughly understand the students' perspectives on public speaking and their strategies, enhancing their understanding of the subject matter.

3.3. Sampling Procedures and Sample

3.3.1. Sampling Procedures

The research utilized convenience sampling to gather data from targeted respondents, a non-probability method that was cost-effective and efficient due to its availability and accessibility. The researcher obtained approval from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and academic advisor to administer the questionnaire during Public Speaking classes. This allowed for a smooth data collection process, ensuring the survey was conducted within the appropriate time and academic setting. The method allowed for the most results collected in a short time.

3.3.2. Sample

The survey involved 122 English-majored students from TDTU's Standard or High-quality programs, with 86.9% juniors and 13.1% seniors. Juniors were chosen due to their recent completion of Speaking 1-4 and Public Speaking courses,

allowing better recollection and insights into their public speaking performance. The survey targeted students with high response rates and experience in delivering speeches, aiming to provide a heightened understanding of their abilities, strengths, and areas for improvement, enabling them to offer valuable insights and perspectives.

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale and open-ended questions to gather participants' views on public speaking skills. The questionnaire collected demographic information, including gender, academic year, English program, and learning duration. It also asked about participants' experience, skills, and career importance. The questionnaire also explored psychological, linguistic, and instructional factors affecting public speaking performance. The final section allowed participants to share their perspectives and strategies for overcoming challenges. The survey was conducted in English or Vietnamese, allowing for comfortable expression of ideas. The data collected was used to propose practical recommendations for addressing internal and external factors affecting public speaking skills.

3.4.2. Interview

This research employed interview methods to validate survey results, allowing for active listening, clarification, and in-depth responses. The semi-structured interviews were suitable for the qualitative approach, allowing for flexibility and adjusting research questions. Reputation-building was also utilized to elicit more candid information. After obtaining questionnaire data, five participants were selected for interviews, with the location determined after discussion with the interviewees.

3.5. Data collection

The survey instrument was designed using Google Forms and reviewed by a consulting advisor. The survey was administered to students during their public speaking course, and consent forms were included. Data was collected anonymously and used for statistical analysis. Interviews were conducted to verify data authenticity. Researchers obtained participants' contact information through the survey questionnaire and designed a form to request interview time slots. Five students responded, and interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom video conferencing. The collected data was then organized into an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis.

3.6. Data Analysis

The researcher used SPSS Version 20 software to analyze data, calculate descriptive statistics, and use Cronbach's Alpha to assess reliability. The qualitative examination included detailed responses to subjective questions. Interview data was transcribed and coded to maintain confidentiality, with interviewees assigned distinct identifiers.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

3.7.1. Validity of the Questionnaire

This paper uses questions adapted from previous studies by Dang et al., (2022), Megawati & Apriani (2023), Nguyen & Tong, (2024), Sugiyati & Indriani (2021), and Tran & Dang, (2019), which were published in peer-reviewed journals.

The researcher adapts questions from prior research, pilots instruments, and collaborates with an academic advisor. Questions are modified for specific study contexts and objectives. This method enhances the credibility and reproducibility of findings by optimizing instrumentation for the investigation's unique requirements, as per Brooks et al., (2016).

3.7.2. Validity of the Interview

The interview questions were adapted from previous research, providing a solid foundation for the current study's data collection tools. The researcher collaborated with their academic advisor to validate the questions' appropriateness, ensuring alignment with research aims and enhancing the quality and credibility of the interview data.

3.7.3. Reliability of the Questionnaire's Result

The researcher used SPSS software to assess the survey instrument's reliability, calculating Cronbach's alpha to 0.88, indicating good internal consistency. This quantitative validation and qualitative input from the academic advisor confirm the instrument's suitability for the research objectives.

4. Results

4.1. General Background Information

The survey reveals that 96 out of 122 English-majored students at Ton Duc Thang University are enrolled in the Standard English program, with most having over 7 years of experience. Most have academic and professional experience with public speaking. Most consider their skills as "normal" or "good," with 86.1% valuing them as "important" or "very important" for future careers. Students practice regularly to improve their speeches.

4.2. Factors Affecting Public Speaking

Performance of English-Major Students

The analysis of factors affecting students' public speaking performance reveals that anxiety has the highest mean score of 3.95, indicating that nervousness plays a significant role in hindering performance. Shyness, with a mean score of 3.24, suggests that students' reluctance to speak in front of others further contributes to challenges in public speaking. In contrast, motivation (mean score of 2.56) and self-efficacy (mean score of 3.16) are relatively lower, suggesting that a lack of intrinsic drive and confidence may also negatively impact their ability to perform well in public speaking situations.

4.2.1. Psychological Factors

Anxiety

Over 58% of respondents experience anxiety when speaking in public, with 67% experiencing forgetfulness and 31.1% worrying about making mistakes. Despite these challenges, 84.4% view public speaking skills as valuable for future careers. However, over half of the students report feeling nervous and forgetful, suggesting that additional support and training may be needed to help develop greater confidence and competence in public speaking. This highlights the importance of oral communication competencies in academic and professional settings.

Shyness

The survey data shows that English-majored students face significant challenges in public speaking, with 52.4% feeling shy or self-conscious and 36.9% feeling uncomfortable being the center of attention. 38.5% shy away from public speaking opportunities. Additionally, students have diverse perspectives on group discussions, with 31.2% disagreeing and 35.3% agreeing on difficulty speaking up. This diversity may hinder the development of public speaking competencies.

Lack of Motivation

The survey data shows a mixed response from English-majored students regarding motivation for improving their public speaking skills. While 10.7% disagree, 27.9% remain neutral, and 25.4% agree or strongly agree, the majority (68.9%) see the importance of improving skills for future careers. The data suggests a need for a more tailored approach to sustain students' engagement and drive in enhancing their public speaking competencies. Teachers can play a role in motivation.

Self-Efficacy

The survey data shows that English-majored students' self-efficacy and confidence levels in public speaking are

generally neutral, with 40.2% remaining neutral. This trend is particularly evident in their beliefs about overcoming challenges and their self-efficacy in delivering effective speeches. The data suggests a need for further strengthening of these skills.

4.2.2. Linguistic Factors

The survey data shows that English major students need help using appropriate Vocabulary during public speaking, with many using basic Vocabulary and not incorporating advanced words naturally. Other linguistic elements like ending sounds, consonant clusters, word stress, and grammar structure also affect their performance. However, 86.9% of students believe improving their linguistic skills would enhance their public speaking performance.

4.2.3. Instructional Factors

A survey found that 45.1% of students believe harsh teacher correction affects their public speaking performance, while 77% find constructive feedback beneficial. Teachers should adopt a more encouraging approach and have a welcoming attitude towards students. The majority believe more presentation opportunities would significantly improve their public speaking skills. Teachers should host more activities for students to present in front of the class, check with each group for English usage, and give brief talks about their interests. Individual presentations are most effective, but group presentations have the most significant improvement. Most students need to be more neutral on whether the teacher's Vietnamese use affects their English performance.

4.3. Overcoming Challenges in Public Speaking for English-Major Students at Ton Duc Thang University

The survey results reveal a significant concern about anxiety issues students face before and during public speaking performances at TDTU. Students have developed unique strategies to overcome these obstacles, including practice, avoiding direct eye contact, thorough preparation, and embracing constructive feedback. To overcome shyness and nervousness, students emphasize the importance of consistent exposure and experience, avoiding direct eye contact, and focusing on the entire classroom. Thorough preparation is also crucial, but students acknowledge that not all audience reactions are predictable and should be flexible. The interviewees emphasized the importance of adopting a positive mindset, learning from mistakes, and embracing constructive feedback to improve public speaking skills continually.

5. Discussion

5.1. Discussions on Research's Findings

5.1.1. Psychological Factors

Anxiety, Shyness, Lack of Motivation

The survey results show that anxiety is the primary factor affecting English-major students' public speaking performance, with over 58% of respondents experiencing anxiety. This is consistent with previous research, which found that 73% of students were worried about making mistakes when speaking English. Anxiety could be a result of a lack of preparation or time for public speaking. Shyness is also a significant issue, with 38.5% of respondents having avoidance behavior and 36.9% feeling uncomfortable being the center of attention. Natural shyness is the root cause of their fear of public speaking. Motivation to improve public speaking skills is mixed, with 25.4% feeling unmotivated, while 29.5% find it difficult. Poor self-esteem can make students feel less willing and confident in public speaking. Teachers should develop practical public speaking skills and incorporate strategies to boost self-efficacy and overall learning engagement, such as motivational coaching, peer-support networks, and tailored feedback mechanisms.

Self-efficacy

The self-efficacy of English-major students at TDTU is not uniform, with 40.2% remaining neutral about their confidence in public speaking. This suggests that their self-efficacy may not be firmly established due to a lack of enactive mastery experiences, limited positive verbal persuasion, or insufficient learning opportunities. Zhang et al., (2020) found that students' self-efficacy in English public speaking can fluctuate based on task difficulty, with students showing a more decisive pattern in their confidence to express their ideas during public speaking engagements. However, students still experience anxiety when giving a public speech about a new topic, suggesting that the specific demands and complexity of the task may significantly impact their self-efficacy and confidence levels.

5.1.2. Linguistic Factors

The survey data reveals that English-majored students face significant challenges in their public speaking performance, particularly in using appropriate Vocabulary. The majority struggle with using basic Vocabulary and incorporating advanced words into their sentences. This is in line with previous research indicating that a lack of vocabulary is a major contributing factor to speaking difficulties among English learners. The survey also shows that English-major students at TDTU are more proficient at pronunciation than those at Tay Do University, possibly due to the Faculty of Foreign

Languages (FFL) curriculum. The data also shows disagreements regarding the ability to use correct grammar structures or tenses during public speaking. 36.1% of respondents were neutral, while 27.9% agreed and 23.8% disagreed. This may be due to students learning by heart rather than understanding the main points of their speech. The findings suggest that the difficulty with using appropriate Vocabulary is further complicated by grammatical issues, making it a significant obstacle for English-majored students in achieving practical public speaking skills.

5.1.3. Instructional Factors

The survey data shows that 45.1% of students believe harsh teacher correction negatively affects their public speaking abilities, while 77% find constructive feedback beneficial. Most students believe that increased opportunities for practice would significantly enhance their public speaking competencies. Students feel scared when receiving harsh feedback, but they try to pull themselves back and believe that teachers have the right to say it. They also feel more motivated when feedback is both encouraging and points out mistakes. Most students disagree or remain neutral on whether the teacher's use of the Vietnamese language affects their English performance. This contrasts with previous studies that found no significant correlation between instructional factors and students' speaking performance. The survey data suggests that instructional factors, such as teacher feedback and practice opportunities, are crucial in shaping public speaking performance.

5.2. Recommendations

Proper preparation is essential for improving public speaking skills. This includes researching speech topics, practicing pronunciation speaking in front of a mirror, and practicing relaxation strategies. Even high self-confidence students can experience nervousness in the first part of a speech, so relaxation strategies like deep breathing and muscle relaxation can help manage public speaking anxiety.

Instructional factors, such as ample preparation time, teaching techniques like mind mapping, and balancing speaking opportunities, can also support students' development. An exposure-based approach can gradually build students' confidence and skills. Recognizing mistakes as a natural part of language learning and cultivating a positive mindset can further support students. Consistent and personalized feedback can enhance self-confidence and performance.

Exposure therapy, combined with cognitive modification and skills training, can effectively reduce speaking anxiety. By addressing both individual and instructional strategies, these recommendations can contribute to the development of effective public speaking skills.

5.3. Limitations

The study on English-majored students' perspectives has limitations, including a small data pool of 122 third and fourth-year students and in-depth interviews with only five students. This small sample size raises questions about the generalizability of the findings. The survey instrument may have been subject to response bias, and the researchers struggled to get students to participate in follow-up interviews. Additionally, the study focused solely on students' perspectives without exploring the viewpoints of their lecturers, resulting in potentially one-sided findings. These limitations suggest that the research findings should be interpreted cautiously, as they may not fully represent the broader population of English-majored students.

6. Conclusions

The study at TDTU reveals that psychological factors like anxiety, self-confidence, shyness, and motivation significantly impact students' public speaking performance. Linguistic factors like English proficiency and vocabulary knowledge also play a role. Instructional factors like feedback, practice opportunities, and teaching methods also influence students' skills development. Students believe thorough preparation through research and practice is the most effective solution for improving their public speaking performance. The findings can guide students and academic institutions in developing targeted strategies to enhance public speaking skills among English-majored students.

Abbreviations

FFL: Faculty of Foreign Languages
TDTU: Ton Duc Thang University

Author Contributions

Minh Tuan Truong: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review.

Tam My Tran: Formal Analysis, Software, Writing – Original Draft, Investigation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



Truong Tuan-Minh hold an MA in English Language Arts and he is a lecturer in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU), one of Vietnam's foremost research universities. His research interests are English teaching methodologies, English linguistics, English as a lingua franca, sociolinguistics, and language acquisition. He can be contacted via email: truongtuanminh@tdtu.edu.vn