



International Journal of Language Studies

ISSN: 3078-2244 (Online)

2026, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 21–33

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60087/ijls.vol3.n3.002>

Journal homepage: <https://ijlangstudies.org>



Enhancing Impromptu Speech in Tourism English Communication through Social Constructivist and Experiential Learning Activities

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Abstract

An important aspect of speaking performance is coping with unexpected communicative situations. This is particularly crucial in tourism English communication (TEC), where speakers often need to answer unexpected questions, provide quick information, introduce destinations, explain itineraries, and handle tourists' problems. In this context, impromptu speech (IS) is considered a practical speaking skill that supports both academic and professional communication. However, studying on IS in EFL and tourism contexts remains limited. Therefore, this study investigates the use of social constructivist principles (SC) and experiential learning (EL) to enhance IS performance in TEC (Da, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, social constructivism (SC) (Vygotsky, 1978) is the main theoretical framework, Da (1984) provides the practice-feedback-reflection component, and ChatGPT is used as a supporting tool for feedback and assessment. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study was conducted with 67 third-year students at the University of Finance-Marketing (UFM). Students' IS performance was assessed in terms of fluency, pronunciation, idea organization, and response time. ChatGPT provided supplementary criterion-based feedback, while the researcher reviewed the AI-generated output and retained responsibility for the final scores. The findings indicated that participation in IS activities grounded in social interaction, repeated practice, and ChatGPT feedback was associated with improved spontaneous speech performance in unexpected communicative situations. The study suggests that IS activities can be usefully integrated into TEC teaching to help students become more confident, flexible, and responsive speakers.

Keywords: ChatGPT; impromptu speech; social constructivism; speaking skills; Tourism English

Article information: Received: 05/06/2026;

Accepted: 22/08/2026;

Published: 25/09/2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of study

In EFL higher education context, speaking competence is not limited to prepared presentations or scripted dialogues. Learners are increasingly expected to communicate ideas clearly, respond to unexpected questions, and manage real-time interaction in academic, professional, and tourism contexts. In TEC course, learners may need to introduce destinations, explain schedules, answer tourists' questions, or respond to unexpected requests. In this regard, impromptu speech is positioned as the main skill of the study, while TEC is used as the practical communication context. It requires learners to think quickly, organize ideas logically, use appropriate language, and respond under limited preparation time.

However, many EFL learners still experience difficulties when performing IS tasks. Recent studies show that learners often struggle with anxiety, limited vocabulary, weak idea organization, pronunciation concerns, and lack of confidence when speaking spontaneously (Arifin, 2024; El Shazly, 2021). These challenges are particularly relevant in university speaking classes and TEC lessons, where students may be more familiar with prepared oral performances than spontaneous communication. As a result, they may be able to deliver rehearsed presentations but still find it difficult to respond effectively to sudden questions or unfamiliar tourism-related situations.

To address this issue, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) and EL (Da, 1984) provide useful theoretical foundations. SC (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasizes learning through interaction, collaboration, scaffolding, and meaning making with others. In speaking instruction, this view supports the use of cooperative learning (CL) activities where learners can practise, exchange ideas, receive feedback, and improve their confidence through peer interaction. EL (Da, 1984) is used to organize the learning process through practice, feedback, reflection, and repeated performance. Therefore, the two theories are not separate elements; they work together to explain why students learn IS through social interaction and experience-based practice.

In recent years, ChatGPT-supported language learning has also created new opportunities for speaking practice. ChatGPT can provide learners with prompts, feedback, model answers, and repeated opportunities to practise outside the classroom. Recent research indicates that ChatGPT-supported speaking practice may help improve learners' speaking performance, engagement, confidence, and anxiety management (Du & Daniel, 2024; Ebadi et al., 2025; El Shazly, 2021). In the present study, ChatGPT is not an additional theory; it functions as a pedagogical support tool for practice, formative feedback, and supplementary assessment support. Thus, ChatGPT should be used as a pedagogical support rather than a replacement for teacher guidance and peer interaction.

Although previous research has examined speaking performance, CL, flipped learning, and ChatGPT speaking practice, there remains a need for further investigation into how these elements can be integrated to enhance IS in EFL university contexts, particularly in TEC. Therefore, the present study aims to explore how IS can be improved through a coherent pedagogical model in which SC (Vygotsky, 1978) explains interaction, EL (Da, 1984) guides repeated practice and reflection, CL provides classroom activities, and ChatGPT supports feedback.

1.2. The aims and significations of the study

This study is to examine how students' IS performance can be enhanced through the application of SC (Vygotsky, 1978) as the main theories and EL (Da, 1984) as the practice and reflection cycle in an EFL context, with reference to TEC. More specifically, the study aims to design and implement speech-based activities that encourage learners to practise spontaneous oral communication through interaction, cooperation, reflection, and ChatGPT feedback.

The study also aims to investigate whether these activities can enhance students' IS performance, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, idea organization, and response time. In addition, it explores students' attitudes toward IS practice, especially their confidence and ability to cope with unexpected communicative situations in general and tourism-related situations in particular.

This study is significant in several ways. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how SC (Vygotsky, 1978) and EL (Da, 1984) can be applied to the teaching of IS. It shows that spontaneous speech performance can be developed through social interaction, cooperative practice, repeated performance, and reflective learning.

Pedagogically, the study provides practical implications for EFL speech instruction and TEC teaching. It suggests that teachers should create more opportunities for students to practise unplanned oral communication instead of focusing mainly on prepared presentations. Through CL tasks and ChatGPT feedback, students may become more confident, flexible, and responsive in real-time communication.

Practically, the study may help EFL teachers design more effective activities for university students' IS practice. The use of AI tools can support learners by providing prompts, feedback, model responses, and additional practice opportunities beyond classroom time. ChatGPT is therefore used as a support mechanism, not as a separate theoretical framework. The study is expected to offer a useful teaching direction for improving IS performance in higher education, especially for learners who need English for TEC.

1.3. Research questions

To achieve the aims mentioned above, the current study attempts to find out the answers to the following questions:

- *To what extent do IS activities improve students' speaking performance in TEC?*
- *How do students perceive the use of IS activities supported by cooperative practice and ChatGPT feedback?*

1.4. Hypotheses

When it comes to the effectiveness of IS on speaking performance, Dean (1987) and Henderson (1982) strongly stated that different activities designed to promote IS skills afford learners opportunities to practice and become more confident in speaking skills as well as presentation sessions. Moreover, through dealing with unexpected questions, learners can develop the ability to adapt to different circumstances. This adaptive ability is directly relevant to TEC, where speakers often need to respond immediately to tourists' questions, requests, or complaints. However, in the Vietnamese university context, the author raises the concern of whether students in both groups still face difficulties in speaking performance after attending the course. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no significant difference between the speaking presentation performance of students in the control group and the experimental group after the treatment. In other words, IS activities may not contribute to enhancing students' speaking performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of IS and its role in tourism communication.

IS involves delivering a speech or presentation without any advance preparation. This skill offers quick thinking and the ability to organize thoughts instantly. Henderson (1982) defined it as "IS is a relatively simple formal speaking exercise of a limited duration of time and with limited formal preparation". This implied that IS function is likely to be applied in structured and academic speaking practice through relative straightforward techniques. In a

presentation context, IS is essential for dealing with unplanned circumstances, such as replying audiences' questions or responding to feedback. In TEC, IS is also useful when learners need to welcome tourists, introduce local attractions, explain itineraries, answer unexpected questions, or handle simple complaints. In these situations, speakers are required to deliver clear communication, adaptability, and confidence as well as logically organizing their ideas, even with minimal time to prepare them (Crompton et al., 2024; Henderson, 1982; Jannah et al., 2020).

About the role of IS in boosting speaking performance, some studies pointed out that taking part in IS tasks enhances critical and logical thinking and structured responses under pressure within a short period. It also fosters confidence as well as making speakers more flexible with spontaneous speech. In TEC learning, this flexibility is important because students may have to use English in real-time service encounters and TEC. Docena et al. (2023) stated that regular tasks of IS tasks support students to release stress and anxiety in oral sessions and enhance their fluency and coherence in the presentation period. According to Gumartifa and Syahri (2022), IS, which could be utilized in various ways in teaching speaking, is recognized as one of the useful methods for promoting university students' oral speaking, especially speaking performance.

2.2. *Social Constructivism and Impromptu Speech Practice*

SC, mainly grounded in the work of Vygotsky (1978), views learning as a social and interactive process. From this perspective, learners do not develop knowledge in isolation. Instead, they learn through interaction with teachers, peers, and the surrounding learning environment. One important concept in Vygotsky (1978) theory is the Zone of Proximal Development, which refers to the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can do with support. In language learning, this support may appear in the form of teacher guidance, peer assistance, group discussion, feedback, questioning, and scaffolding.

In EFL speaking instruction, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) is highly relevant because speaking is not only an individual language skill but also a social activity. Students need opportunities to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, ask for clarification, respond to others, and receive support when they face difficulty. Alkhudiry (2022) emphasizes that Vygotsky (1978) social constructivism theory highlights meaningful human interaction as an important factor in L² learning and knowledge co-construction. Similarly, Hung (2019) shows that CL in Vietnamese EFL contexts can help students develop group work skills, problem-solving skills, confidence, and communication ability, although teachers still need to guide and structure group interaction carefully.

For IS, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) provides a strong theoretical basis because students often need to respond quickly to unexpected questions or topics. In such situations, peer interaction and teacher scaffolding can help students generate ideas, organize responses, and reduce speaking anxiety. CL activities, such as pair discussion, group brainstorming, peer questioning, and short response practice, allow students to prepare mentally and linguistically before producing spontaneous speech. Through this process, learners can gradually move from supported performance to more independent performance.

In TEC, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) is especially useful. It often occurs in real-time interaction, such as welcoming tourists, introducing destinations, explaining itineraries, answering

unexpected questions, and responding to tourists' requests or complaints. These situations require students to use English not only accurately but also appropriately and confidently. Therefore, classroom activities should allow learners to practise social interaction rather than simply memorize fixed dialogues. In this study, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) is used as the main theoretical lens to explain how interaction, cooperation, and scaffolding can support students' IS performance in TEC contexts.

2.3. *Experiential Learning and Impromptu Speech Development*

EL (Da, 1984) explains that learning develops through experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and further action. In this view, learners do not learn effectively only by receiving information from teachers. They also need to take part in meaningful tasks, reflect on their performance, receive feedback, and apply what they have learned to new situations. Kolb's learning cycle includes four main stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

This theory is closely related to IS practice because spontaneous speaking cannot be improved through explanation alone. Students need repeated opportunities to speak under limited preparation time, make mistakes, receive feedback, reflect on their performance, and try again. Morris (2020) argues that EL (Da, 1984) remains a useful model for understanding how learners develop through experience, although it should be applied flexibly according to learning contexts.

In the context of IS, the EL (Da, 1984) can be clearly applied. First, students experience a speaking task, such as answering an unexpected question or giving a short response to a tourism-related situation. Second, they reflect on their performance, including fluency, pronunciation, response time, and idea organization. Third, they identify useful strategies, vocabulary, or structures that may help them perform better. Finally, they apply these strategies in another speaking task. Through this repeated cycle, students can gradually improve their spontaneous speech performance and become more confident in real-time communication.

EL (Da, 1984) is also suitable for TEC because this field requires practical and situation-based communication. Ho-Minh and Suppasetseree (2025) show that technology-enhanced Tourism and Hospitality English tasks can improve learners' speaking performance, fluency, pronunciation, engagement, and confidence when structured support is provided. In the present study, ChatGPT feedback is used only as a support tool within the EL (Da, 1984). It can provide prompts, model responses, and feedback after students practice their IS tasks. However, ChatGPT does not replace teachers or peers. Instead, it supports students' reflection and repeated practice.

Overall, SC (Vygotsky, 1978) and EL (Da, 1984) complement each other in this study. SC (Vygotsky, 1978) explains why students need interaction, cooperation, and scaffolding, while EL (Da, 1984) explains how students improve through practice, feedback, reflection, and repeated performance. Together, these two theories provide a coherent foundation for designing IS activities in TEC.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

67 third-year students at UFM were invited to participate in this study. They came from two intact speaking classes, with 33 students in Class A and 34 students in Class B. The students registered for the classes according to their schedules and personal preferences before the groups were designated. Class A was the control group, while Class B served as the experimental group. Therefore, group assignments were not random and may have introduced selection bias. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the differences between the two groups.

3.2. Data collection procedure

The experimental research was conducted within three months. According to Bless and Burger (2016), experimental research is more dominant than others by offering a methodical investigation of causal relations. It can also provide timely, inclusive, and causal evidence to inform accounting standard setting (McDaniel & Hand, 1996). Thus, the method was used to find out the result of the current study.

At the initial stage of the study, a pre-test was administered to evaluate the speaking performance of students in both the control and experimental groups. The assessment focused on several aspects of oral performance, including visual appeal, comprehension, speaking delivery, and clarity.

During the experimental period, the control group received instruction through conventional teaching methods. In particular, students were taught fundamental components of speaking performance, including physical delivery, story organization, and visual support. Physical delivery involved the use of gestures, posture, eye contact, and voice control. Story organization focused on how to structure a standard presentation, while visual support emphasized the effective and natural use of language in oral delivery. After receiving instruction, students worked in groups and took turns practising presentation topics with their peers. They also received feedback from both classmates and the teacher. Some topics were loosely related to TEC contexts, such as introducing tourist destinations, explaining travel plans, and answering tourists' questions. This was done to maintain a practical connection between speaking practice and TEC.

The experimental group received the same foundational instruction in speaking performance as the control group. However, the treatment activities were specifically designed to develop students' impromptu speech skills, based on the activities suggested by Henderson (1982). These activities placed greater emphasis on spontaneous responses, limited preparation time, and immediate oral performance in TEC. The detailed treatment procedure was implemented as follows.

It should be noted that both groups were taught by the same teacher and received an equivalent amount of instructional input. This arrangement was intended to ensure fairness and consistency during the experimental process.

After the treatment period, which lasted three months from the pre-test stage to the end of the course, a post-test was conducted to examine the effects of impromptu speech activities on students' speaking performance.

ChatGPT was used only as a supplementary tool during the assessment process. The same assessment criteria and a standardized prompt were applied to all students' performances to maintain consistency. ChatGPT generated criterion-based feedback, but its output was not automatically accepted as the final assessment result. The researcher reviewed each performance, compared the AI-generated feedback with the established assessment criteria, and retained responsibility for the final score. No score was determined solely by ChatGPT. This human verification was used to reduce possible inconsistency or bias in AI-generated judgments.

The pre-test and post-test scores were then compared using a paired samples t-test. The statistical analysis was conducted with SPSS version 29. The data analysis procedure is presented in the following section.

3.3. Data analysis procedure

As mentioned in the data collection procedure, the collected data would be analyzed by speaking performance software. First, a paired sample t-test was applied to check whether or not the activities of IS enhance students' speaking performance. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that there would be no significant difference in students' speaking performance after the treatment. To examine this hypothesis, paired-samples t-tests were conducted separately for the control group and the experimental group. This procedure was used to determine whether students' speaking performance within each group changed significantly from the pre-test to the post-test.

The results of the paired-samples t-tests and related statistical analyses conducted in SPSS version 29 provided evidence regarding the extent to which IS activities contributed to students' speaking performance. These findings helped answer the research questions and offered pedagogical implications for promoting IS activities in English speaking instruction, particularly in TEC.

4. Findings

As mentioned above, Cronbach's alpha tool is used to highlight the reality of the collected data from the two tests. The following table shows the result of the data analysis.

Table 4.1: Reliability statistics of collected data in relation to the result of pre-test and post-test of control group.

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	33	100
	Excluded ^a	0	0.0
	Total	33	100
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.966	2

Table 4.2: Reliability statistics of collected data in relation to the result of pre-test and post-test of experimental group.

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	34	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	0.0
	Total	34	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.865	2

Table 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrated that Cronbach's alpha values were 0.966 for the control group and 0.865 for the experimental group, indicating high internal consistency of the two measurement points. However, because only two scores were included, these values should be interpreted cautiously and should not be treated as evidence of statistical significance.

Table 4.3: Tests of normality of the result of pre-test and post-test of control group.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE	0.104	33	0.200*	0.972	33	0.534
POST	0.142	33	0.089	0.961	33	0.284

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 4.4: Tests of normality of the result of pre-test and post-test of experimental group.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE	0.146	34	0.065	0.962	34	0.279
POST	0.121	34	0.200*	0.939	34	0.059

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

To examine the distribution of the collected data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted for both the control and experimental groups at the pre-test and post-test stages. As shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, all significance values were greater than 0.05. For the control group, the pre-test scores showed significance values of 0.200 in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.534 in the Shapiro-Wilk test, while the post-test scores showed significance values of 0.089 and 0.284, respectively. Similarly, for the experimental group, the pre-test scores obtained significance values of .065 in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and 0.279 in the Shapiro-Wilk test, whereas the post-test scores obtained significance values of 0.200 and 0.059, respectively.

These results indicate that the data did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Therefore, the use of parametric statistical procedures was considered appropriate. Based on this assumption, paired-samples t-tests were conducted to examine changes in students' speaking performance from the pre-test to the post-test. The results are presented in the following section.

Table 4.5. Comparison of pretest and posttest of the control group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE	5.997	33	0.5229	0.0910
	POST	6.518	33	0.5520	0.0961

Paired Samples Test							
Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		n		Lower Upper			

Pair 1	PRE	-	-	0.1949	0.0339	-0.5903	-0.4521	-	32	0.000
	POST		0.5212					15.365		

Based on the paired samples t-test results, there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group, with the significance value reported as $p < 0.001$. Specifically, the mean post-test score ($M = 6.518$) was higher than the mean pre-test score ($M = 5.997$), indicating an average increase of 0.5212 points after the course. This finding suggests that the control group showed a measurable improvement in speaking performance. However, the magnitude of improvement was relatively modest compared with that of the experimental group. The standard deviation also increased slightly from the pre-test ($SD = 0.5229$) to the post-test ($SD = 0.5520$), suggesting a small increase in score variability among students after the course.

Table 4.6. Comparison of pretest and posttest of the experimental group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 2	PRE	6.100	34	0.3247	0.0557
	POST	7.806	34	0.3668	0.0629

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 2	PRE - POST	-1.7059	0.2386	0.0409	-1.7891	-1.6226	-41.687	33	0.000

As shown in Table 4.6, the paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group. The mean post-test score ($M = 7.806$) was higher than the mean pre-test score ($M = 6.100$), indicating an average increase of 1.7059 points after the treatment.

The result was statistically significant, with $p < 0.001$, suggesting that the improvement in the experimental group was unlikely to have occurred by chance. This finding indicates that the IS activities may have contributed positively to students' speaking performance. The relatively small standard error of the mean difference ($SE = 0.0409$) also suggests that the estimated mean difference was stable. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that

there would be no significant difference in students' speaking performance after the treatment, was rejected. Overall, the results suggest that the experimental group demonstrated a substantial improvement in speaking performance from the pre-test to the post-test.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that IS activities were associated with positive changes in students' speaking performance. Although both the control group and the experimental group showed improvement after the course, the experimental group achieved a greater increase in the post-test results. These findings suggest that IS activities supported by SC principles (Vygotsky, 1978), EL (Da, 1984), cooperative practice, and ChatGPT feedback may have contributed to improvements in students' spontaneous speech performance.

The results also show that IS practice can help students become more confident and flexible when dealing with unexpected speaking situations. This is especially important in TEC, where learners may need to answer tourists' questions, introduce destinations, explain travel plans, or respond to simple requests without much preparation time. Therefore, IS should not be treated only as a speaking performance technique, but also as a practical communicative skill for real-life and professional tourism contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that students can improve their IS performance when they are given regular opportunities to practise, interact with peers, receive feedback, and reflect on their performance. SC (Vygotsky, 1978) explains the role of interaction and cooperation in the learning process, while EL (Da, 1984) supports repeated practice and reflection. In this study, ChatGPT was used as a supplementary tool for criterion-based feedback during the assessment process. The researcher reviewed the AI-generated feedback against the established assessment criteria and retained responsibility for the final scores. Therefore, ChatGPT supported rather than replaced human judgment.

In conclusion, the study highlights the potential value of integrating IS activities into English speaking instruction, particularly in TEC. The findings imply that teachers should design more spontaneous, interactive, and situation-based speaking tasks to help students develop fluency, pronunciation, response time, and confidence.

This study has a limitation related to participant selection. Because students registered for the two classes according to their schedules and personal preferences, the groups were not randomly formed. Pre-existing differences between the two classes may therefore have influenced the findings. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as evidence of differences associated with the instructional activities rather than as definitive proof of a causal effect.

Future studies may involve a larger number of participants, apply more tourism-specific speaking tasks, and examine learners' attitudes in greater depth through interviews or classroom observations.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the students who participated in this study.

Funding

This research is funded by University of Finance - Marketing, Vietnam

Author Contributions

Khoa, T.T: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Validation, Visualization, Writing-Original Draft, Writing-Review & Editing, and Project Administration. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

All research procedures were conducted in accordance with applicable ethical principles for educational research, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the participants' right to withdraw without academic penalty.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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