

**THE INFLUENCES OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE ON ENGLISH-MAJORED FRESHMEN'
SPEAKING SKILL, CASE STUDY AT THE INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY OF HO CHI MINH CITY.**

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ABSTRACT

In the fast-changing environment of global education, English language skills have become pivotal to most students at higher education institutions, including the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). However, while the mother tongue tends to be overused in the speaking class setting by IUH's first-year English language students, the students rely excessively on translation strategies, which restrains the former's speaking confidence and fluency. The primary goal of the present study includes exploration and analysis of the factors contributing to and influencing mother tongue usage and the development of IUH-specific recommendations to address these challenges. Using quantitative research method through questionnaire, the research emphasizes the prominent reasons for source language overreliance, as well as the necessity for mandating target language primarily. The results of the study demonstrate the significance of communication and support the interactive task-based innovation in English language instruction. Additionally, the study presents the impact of teachers on the classroom environment and their views regarding English education in Vietnam. The students' reflection includes the significance of English in global integration and advice on steps, including reducing excessive mother tongue usage. Furthermore, this research presents a new perspective on the development of the English-speaking ability of IUH freshmen and helpful recommendations for educators.

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of global education and industry, English proficiency is paramount for students entering higher education institutions such as the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). The

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practical situation at IUH reveals that first-year English students often find challenges when applying translation techniques, which makes them feel comfortable and confident in their speaking process. However, these learning methods indirectly mitigate the effectiveness of any communication and make students more passive in the English thinking process in their minds. This thesis topic is urgent for every first-year student as English is an essential condition for academic success as well as a pivotal skill for future employment. The predominance of using the first language (L1) in speaking class causes detrimental effects on the robust English-speaking skills of English-majored students, especially freshmen who require a solid foundation to develop their communication skills in college and in finding a job. This thesis is particularly important in addressing the difficulties in the thinking process of freshmen as they communicate in English and equipping them with effective ways to learn speaking skills better and more efficiently. This research aims to explore practical solutions tailored to first year IUH's academic and cultural context, fostering an environment where freshmen can thrive linguistically and academically.

In conclusion, undertaking this graduate thesis is a meaningful attempt with implications for the long-term success of first-year English students in speaking classes at IUH. Furthermore, when IUH students are professional communicators, lowering the use of their mother tongue in English-speaking classes is an investment in their future success and linguistic competency. Therefore, this research is necessary as it is appropriate for the university's commitment to preparing students for the demands of the global industrial landscape. For the above reasons, our group decided to choose the topic “*The influences of the first language on English-majored freshmen' speaking skills at The Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City.*”

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mother tongue

Hornby (2010) argued that the mother tongue is the language you first learn to speak when you are a child. According to Nishanthi (2020), the language acquired in infancy, known and developed during nurturing, is commonly referred to as the native language or the mother tongue. In conclusion, the mother tongue is the language that an individual initially acquires and learns to speak during childhood. It is the initial language acquired as a baby, the language ingrained during upbringing, commonly known as the native language.

2.2 Communication

According to Bellido and Herrero (2023), communication is an activity of exchanging information between individuals to achieve a common understanding. Luhmann (1992) argued that communication is a social construct that emerges between individuals possessing distinct meanings and characteristics. Fiske (2010) similarly contended that communication involves the creation of meaning and the influence of awareness, attitudes, or behavior rather than merely transmitting information or messages. To wrap up, communication involves the exchange of information, ideas, thoughts, or emotions among individuals or groups. It constitutes a fundamental element of human interaction and holds significant importance in diverse aspects of life.

2.3 Speaking skill

Nunan (2003) stated that speaking is a skill involving the production of structured verbal expressions to convey meaning. Nunan (1995) also emphasized that learning speaking skills is the most important part of learning a second foreign language and that success in learning a foreign language is measured based on the ability to speak in that language. Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning a second language. It is really a structured expression skill. There are many different elements to a successful conversation, such as vocabulary choice, grammar, pronunciation, intonation and fluency. Speaking effectively involves not only the ability to express yourself clearly but also the ability to adapt to a variety

of contexts, speakers, and communication purposes. Like other skills, speaking can be improved with practice, feedback, and exposure to different language situations.

2.4 The significance of communication skills

Rao (2019) has highlighted the importance of English communication skills in the process of global integration, especially speaking skills. Brown (2004) said that speaking is one skill that students will be assessed most in actual situations. Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren (2006) also argued that speaking is one of the most challenging skills that linguistic learners have to confront. Besides, Tripathy (2020) stated that efficient communication ensures that messages are delivered obviously and responsibly to the recipient without any alteration or ambiguity. In conclusion, the studies emphasize the consequence of clear and dependable communication, highlighting the need to convey messages precisely and without confusion. Furthermore, mastering speaking skills is quite difficult and crucial for various aspects of real-life situations, compelling learners to acquire them effectively.

2.5 Communicative activities in English classes

Richards (2006) proposed two methods for achieving the goals of communicative language teaching: these process-based methods are Content-based instruction (CBI) and Task-based instruction (TBI). CBI is an approach that uses content to support language acquisition. Furthermore, different language skills are connected and further developed. TBI uses educational and practical tasks to provide learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful tasks. Similarly, he also mentioned that using communicative language teaching (CLT) methods, including games, role-plays, simulations, and practical task-based communication activities in the classroom, can significantly improve students' learning.

Abe (2013) stated that group activities and personal development, as well as discussions and presentations, are beneficial in classrooms using Communicative language teaching (CLT) methods. Furthermore, the author admits that regular use of English among students will improve their speaking skills, even though it may be stressful for them. Therefore, finding effective methods to adapt English teaching through group work activities is very important.

According to Banciu and Jireghie (2012), teachers should give continuous scaffolding and feedback to their students during all activities. Oradee (2012) also asserted that such communicative activities include information gaps, jigsaws, problem-solving, and role-playing to help enhance students' speaking abilities. Hedge (2001) suggested that free discussion and role-playing can improve students' oral communication skills. Kayi (2012) claimed that interviews are one example of a communicative activity that helps students increase their fluency. Students can conduct interviews on topics they are familiar with. Interviews help students strengthen their communication abilities and socialize more effectively. Klippel (1984) also determined that the interviewer must ask pertinent questions, elicit relevant responses, appropriately understand the interviewee's comments, and participate in productive discourse to conduct an effective interview. To encourage meaningful conversation during an interview, both the interviewer and interviewee must be competent listeners.

Problem-solving is another engaging exercise that might help pupils enhance their oral communication abilities. Students might be given a problem and knowledge to completely comprehend it. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), they are then tasked with determining an acceptable solution to the problem. Klippel (1984) also argued that the vocabulary required for problem-solving tasks varies depending on the

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exercise topic. Students may be asked to make ideas, explain justifications, and accept or reject proposals from peers. This allows students to apply critical thinking to solve real-life challenges.

In short, communicative activities in English classes should be appropriate for students' levels, ranging from simple to sophisticated.

2.6 Current mother tongue usage in English language classrooms

Truong (2018) has highlighted that the prevalent use of the mother tongue in speaking lessons underscores several practical considerations in language education. Incorporating Vietnamese into English lessons, particularly during grammar instruction and vocabulary activities, may serve as a pedagogical bridge to aid comprehension and facilitate learning among students. This approach acknowledges the linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels of learners, offering contextual support and scaffolding to enhance understanding. Moreover, leveraging the mother tongue in certain instructional contexts can promote a more inclusive learning environment where students feel empowered to engage actively in the learning process.

Silvani (2014) sheds light on the practical challenges faced by both teachers and students in language learning environments, particularly when dealing with low proficiency levels. The reliance on the mother tongue as a pedagogical tool to explain complex concepts reflects a pragmatic approach to scaffold learning and ensure comprehension among students with limited English proficiency. Moreover, Silvani's insight into students' inclination to resort to their mother tongue due to feelings of shyness and fear of errors underscores the importance of addressing socio-affective factors in language education. Creating a supportive and encouraging atmosphere where students feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes can significantly enhance their confidence and willingness to engage actively in English communication.

Furthermore, Priyastiti's (2021) insight into the use of the first language (L1) by teachers serves to highlight the multifaceted role of language in classroom dynamics. Beyond mere instructional purposes, the utilization of L1 as a tool for expressing empathy and solidarity underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By communicating with students in their native language, teachers can establish stronger rapport, demonstrate understanding, and cultivate a sense of belonging among diverse learner populations. Additionally, Priyastiti's observation regarding the role of L1 in maintaining discipline underscores its pragmatic function as a means of conveying clear expectations and enforcing classroom rules effectively.

Tosuncuoglu (2012) observed the challenges faced by Turkish learners when engaging with English as a second language. The hesitation noted among these non-native speakers underlines the complex interplay between psychological factors and linguistic proficiency. Factors such as shyness and a perceived lack of significance may impede learners' willingness to actively participate in English-language tasks, hindering their linguistic development. Moreover, the inclination to resort to their native language, albeit for expediency, underscores the comfort and familiarity associated with L1 usage, which may deter learners from fully immersing themselves in English language learning experiences.

In short, the first language is not only used to help teachers teach complex grammar points and new vocabulary but also to keep an efficient lesson in a classroom. However, many students possess different inner fears that prevent them from exhibiting their actual communication skills.

2.7 The advantages of mother tongue usage in English classes and English Speaking classes

Butzkamm (2003) summarizes that students feel less stressed and frustrated when learning a language. In addition, he also mentioned that teachers' selective use of their mother tongue creates a friendly and pleasant atmosphere for students. Besides, Butzkamm also claimed that the native language is the main key to foreign

languages, the instrument which brings us the rapidest, certainest, most accurate, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language.

Celce-Murcia and McIntosh (1991) determined that teachers usually use L1 in class when they want to keep students emotionally emphasised or clarify new vocabulary (Hladká, 2023).

Wharton (2007) assumed that the first language was like a "time-saving device". He described the view of Atkinson, Green, and Tudor that the time-saving way recommended by English language teaching experts is to translate into one's own language. Jančová (2010) commented that some teachers use L1 because they are not self-confident in their English power. Using L1 helps teachers steer clear of errors when speaking the target language.

In conclusion, using L1 can provide a bridge for understanding complex notions and lessons, leading to better comprehension and engagement in the learning process. While it can be valuable in certain contexts, over-dependence on the native language may hinder students' language improvement in the target language. Therefore, it's essential to balance the use of L1 with the mutual goals of language learning.

2.8 The disadvantages associated with excessive mother tongue usage in English classes and English-speaking classes

Although the mother tongue helps learners better understand the meaning of sentences or complex grammar, overusing the mother tongue will affect the acquisition of the target language. Zeebaree (2021) mentioned that excessive use of the mother tongue limits the student's exposure to the target language. He also said that the more learners are exposed to the second language, the faster they can use it. Besides, Sharma (2006) emphasized that using the first language too much will cause students to only be able to communicate in their own language. Giang (2022) demonstrated that teachers using their mother tongue in speaking class made it more difficult for them to get used to English. Furthermore, 13.9% of survey participants thought that their English ability would not develop if teachers used their native language (Giang, 2022). In brief, overdoing L1 will greatly influence the L2 acquisition.

Translation may lead to an over-reliance on the students' home tongue by both teachers and students (Harbord, 1992). As a result, pupils lose confidence in their ability to communicate in English, believing that the only way they will grasp what the instructor says is if it is translated. Or they utilize their native language even when they are perfectly capable of conveying the same concept in English. This can greatly restrict students' opportunities to practice English, and students may fail to see that utilizing English in classroom activities is critical to improving their language abilities. Oversimplification is a common issue with translation. Many cultural and linguistic subtleties cannot be accurately translated (Harbord, 1992). For example, in English, the expression "That's so cool!" denotes something wonderful or incredible. This phrase is the result of the English language's continuous growth, which was influenced by a particular culture at the time.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The study is carried out in English-speaking classes for English-major freshmen at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). IUH is an application- and practice-oriented university, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, that specializes in training in industrial economics and industrial engineering. English-speaking classes are part of IUH's Faculty of Foreign Languages. Speaking classes are often equipped with modern

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equipment, serving as a means of interaction between students and lecturers. The research aims to find out why students and lecturers often use their mother tongue in classes and propose solutions to solve this problem.

3.2 Participants

Our research objective is to reduce the usage of the mother tongue in communication classes for first-year English major students at IUH for the following reasons. Firstly, speaking skills are very important, but they cause many difficulties for students. Besides, this skill is also taught throughout the 4 years of the course and affects other subjects, such as Translation, Interpretation, Phonetics and phonology. In addition, the research subjects we selected were first-year English majors who were weak in skills. As senior students who experienced as freshmen 3 years ago, we observed objectively and deliberately the ways our peers dealt with their communication skills by using word-for-word translation thinking in their speeches. Therefore, we strongly believe that this learning method is the pivotal reason for diminishing the inherent speaking proficiency of first-year students. This is the main aim to promote us to conduct this research because we aspire to help them understand the studying method and apply suitable strategies to develop their speaking skill. Moreover, we would like to propose some of the latest and most innovative practices so that they can strengthen their speaking skills to meet the requirements in the academic journey as well as in their future work.

3.3 Research Design

In exploring the usage of the mother tongue of students and lecturers and the perceived pros and cons of using L1 in English-speaking classes, we pursued the quantitative method design in which responses were collected through a questionnaire. Firstly, using a questionnaire helps us easily collect a lot of information that needs to be surveyed, including the current situation of using the mother tongue in speaking classes, the advantages and disadvantages of using the mother tongue in speaking lessons, and finding solutions for those causes. The second reason we chose a questionnaire survey is that it will make it easier to collect a large number of responses from participants. Besides, the questionnaire survey also helps us easily analyze the data on the topic. From the above three reasons, we conclude and provide reasonable solutions for our own topic.

3.4 Data collection tool

To find answers to the research questions, we conducted a questionnaire survey and observed the frequency of English use by first-year students in speaking classes. The survey uses questionnaires as the main data collection tool, and students are observed in the speaking classroom to support the analysis of students' native language usage situations.

Regarding the survey, we collect information from 155 first-year English majors at IUH. Each student was given a paper questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 7 parts, equivalent to 19 questions. The goal of the questionnaire is to find out the importance of communication skills, activities to improve English speaking skills in classes for students, reasons for using English by students and teaching in classes, advantages and disadvantages when students use their native language in classes and solutions to help reduce their native language in English classes. In addition, the questionnaire was also translated into two languages - English and Vietnamese.

3.5 Procedures

We conduct the data collection process in the following 3 steps. Our first step is to plan and design the questionnaire to suit each part in Chapter 2. The questionnaire was designed through Google Forms (we chose Google Forms because it is very useful in collecting data and giving the most accurate numbers).

After our supervisor provided comments, we revised the questionnaire accordingly. It took us about 1 week to design and edit the questionnaire. In the next step, we conducted a survey in the classrooms of first-year students majoring in the English language. All students who participated in the survey gave opinions that were consistent with the goals we set. After 3 days of surveying classrooms, we collected 155 responses from first-year English language students. After collecting the necessary data, we immediately analyze the collected data.

3.6 Data analysis

After collecting the necessary information, we began analyzing the data. Because we survey via Google Forms, the figures are given as a complete and accurate percentage. We then imported those figures into Microsoft Office Word to insert the charts into our research paper. After we converted the data into charts, we conducted an analysis comparing the percentages of each subject.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings

The questionnaire was sent to English classes to collect students' ideas/views about speaking skills, mother tongue usage and English usage in their speaking classes. All participants are first-year English majors at IUH. All survey questions were collected, analyzed and reported to answer the research questions.

4.1.1 Students and Communication Activities

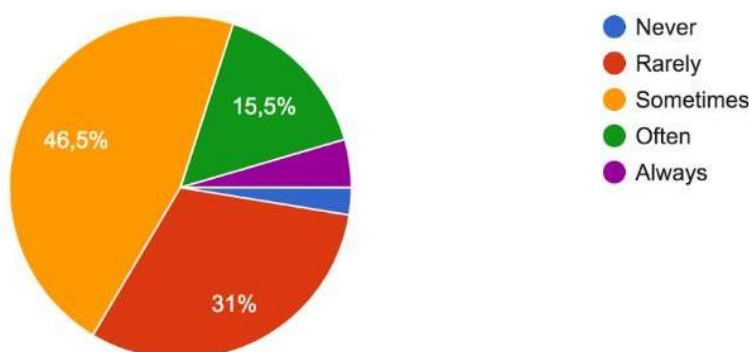


Chart 4.1: Students' participation in communication activities in their classes.

The accompanying pie chart (chart 4.1) depicts the participation of first-year English majors in speaking activities within the classroom. Notably, 46.5% of students reported occasional engagement in speaking activities. This information demonstrates that first-year English-majored students occasionally engage in speaking tasks; however, they will be less proactive when expressing their opinions, and they will only participate when they feel really comfortable. Conversely, a significant portion, comprising 33.6% of respondents, indicated rare or negligible participation in English-speaking activities during classes. This figure highlights that first-year cammr students feel shy or timid when speaking in public, so they find it difficult to participate in communication activities. However, a commendable 20% of students reported regular involvement in such activities. This data shows that these students actively participate in speaking activities in class. Besides, it also represents students' ability to demonstrate confidence and proficiency in speaking English.

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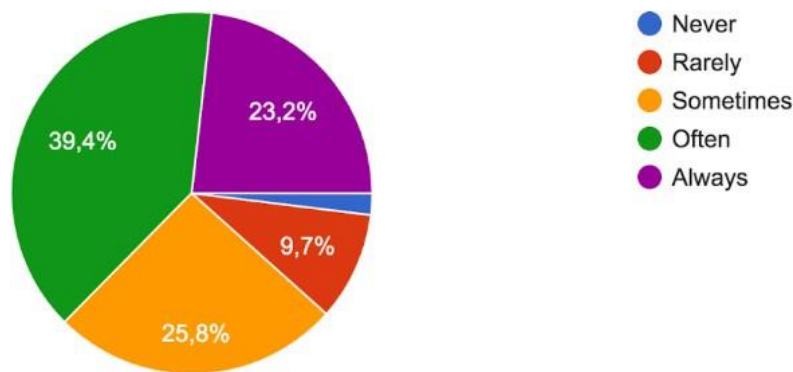


Chart 4.2: Students use L1 in the English-speaking classes.

Furthermore, the data (from chart 4.2) revealed that 42.6% of students admitted to using their native language (L1) during English classes. This can indicate many different factors, such as using the L1 for clarification, expressing complex ideas, lack of vocabulary, or simply out of habit. While a smaller proportion, accounting for 11.6% of respondents, indicated minimal usage of their mother tongue. They can avoid relying on their native language to express their views and instead choose to engage and practice English as much as possible to improve their English ability.

4.1.2 The significance of communication skills

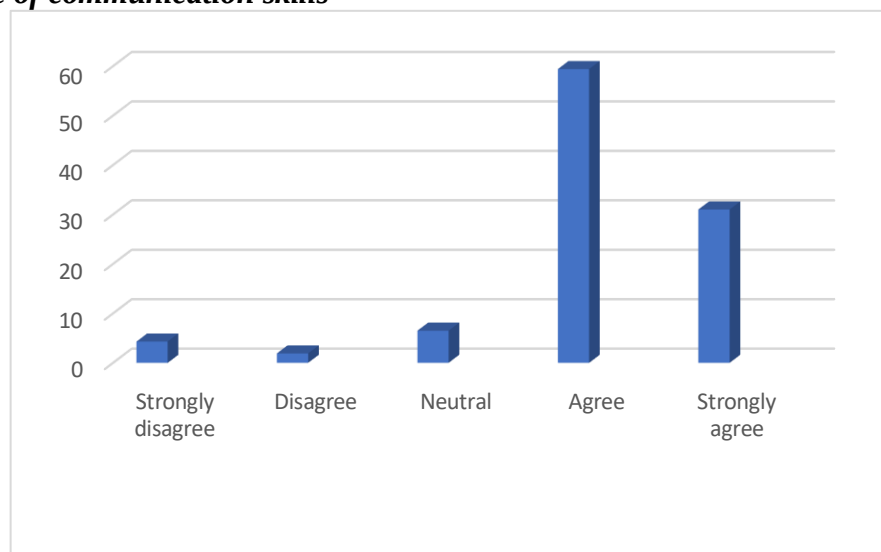


Chart 4.3: Communication is important in life and study.

The bar chart (chart 4.3) shows the importance of speaking skills in various aspects of life. Most students, totaling 90.4%, agreed that communication skills are essential for daily life and study. This shows that students have a deep understanding that communication is essential for their personal development. This suggests that they recognize the significance of being able to express oneself effectively in different situations. However, a small percentage, around 3.2%, had a different view, indicating that not everyone saw communication skills as crucial.

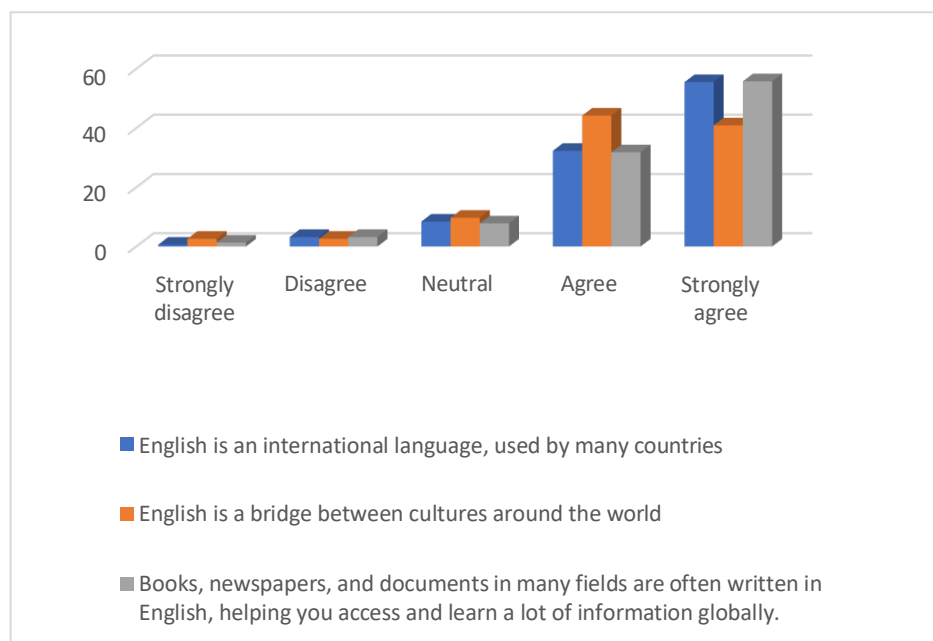


Chart 4.4: English communication skills is important in the global integration process.

Chart 4.4 mentioned English communication skills for global integration; a majority of students, comprising 87.8%, believed that English proficiency is important. This indicates an understanding of the role of English as a global language. On the other hand, about 8.4% of students remained unsure about this idea, showing a level of uncertainty or lack of conviction. Additionally, a small fraction of students, around 4.8%, disagreed with the statement, suggesting that not everyone sees English proficiency as essential for global integration.

Moreover, the graph also sheds light on the perception of English as a bridge between cultures worldwide. A significant portion of the students, totaling 85.1%, either strongly agreed or agreed with this notion, highlighting the role of English in fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding. This indicates a recognition among students of English's ability to facilitate connections and interactions across diverse cultural backgrounds. Conversely, a small percentage, approximately 9.7%, remained neutral on this statement, suggesting some level of uncertainty or lack of opinion regarding English's role as a cultural bridge. Additionally, a fraction of students, around 5.2%, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, indicating differing perspectives on the extent to which English facilitates cultural exchange.

Furthermore, the chart explored students' perceptions regarding the accessibility of information through the English language. A significant majority of students, comprising 87.6%, either strongly agreed or agreed that English serves as a gateway to accessing a wealth of information globally, particularly through books, newspapers, and documents in various fields. This indicates a widespread acknowledgement among students of the importance of English proficiency for acquiring knowledge and staying informed about global developments. However, a small percentage, approximately 12.3%, expressed neutral or opposing views on this statement, suggesting varying levels of agreement or skepticism regarding the role of English in accessing information.

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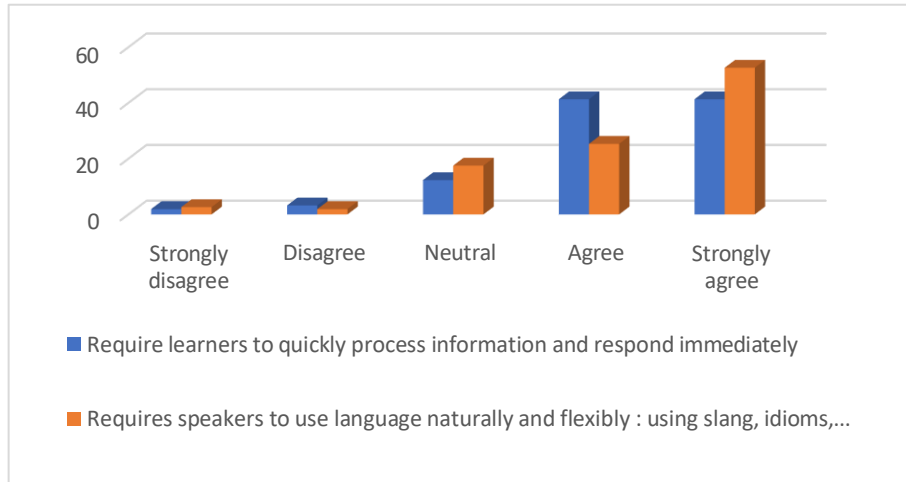


Chart 4.5: Speaking skills are one of the most difficult skills language learners face.

Chart 4.5 provides insight into the difficulties that learners usually face when mastering speaking skills. A significant majority of respondents, totaling 82.6%, either strongly or moderately agreed that speaking skills are among the most challenging to acquire. This indicates widespread acknowledgement of the complexities involved in developing oral communication abilities, particularly the need to process information quickly and respond promptly. On the other hand, a minority, comprising 17.4%, expressed neutral or dissenting views, suggesting varied opinions or reservations about the perceived difficulty of speaking skills.

Furthermore, the graph explored specific aspects contributing to the perceived complexity of speaking proficiency. A majority of participants, totaling 77.9%, firmly or moderately agreed that mastering natural and flexible language usage, including colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions, poses significant challenges for language learners. This underscores a collective recognition among students of the nuanced complexities of effective verbal communication, such as understanding and using culturally relevant linguistic elements. However, a minority, approximately 21.1%, expressed neutral or opposing perspectives on this aspect, indicating different interpretations regarding the role of natural language utilization in speaking skills acquisition.

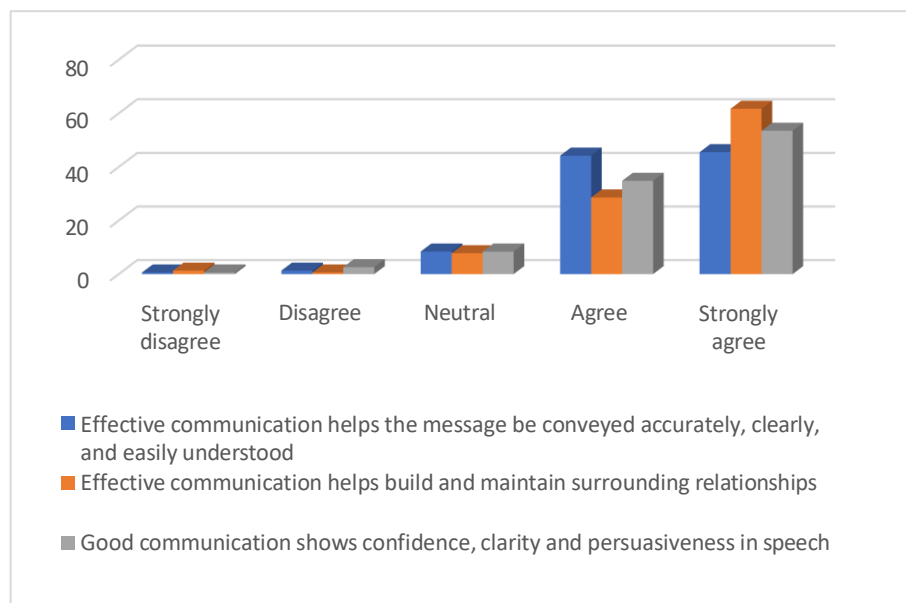


Chart 4.6: Effective communication is important in conveying messages.

Chart 4.6 shows that effective communication plays a crucial role in ensuring that messages are accurately conveyed, clearly articulated, and easily comprehended. A substantial portion of students, comprising 45.5%, strongly agreed with this assertion, while an additional 44.2% expressed agreement. This strong consensus demonstrates widespread recognition among students of the important role of clear and effective communication in a variety of contexts to convey information accurately. Only a minority, representing 8.4% of respondents, remained neutral on this matter, with minimal disagreement observed at 1.3% and a mere 0.6% indicating strong disagreement. The small number of students with neutral opinions shows that they are confused about the role of success in communication. Besides, the very few people who disagree with this view also demonstrate that they have different views on conveying ideas in speech.

Furthermore, the graph underscores the instrumental role of effective communication in fostering and sustaining interpersonal relationships. A significant majority of students, totaling 61.7%, strongly affirmed the importance of communication in this context, with an additional 28.6% expressing agreement. This large amount of agreement highlights students' recognition of the key role effective communication plays in building and connecting relationships in life. Similarly, a negligible proportion, constituting 8.4% of respondents, remained neutral, while disagreement was minimal at 2.6% and strong disagreement at 0.6%. A small percentage of students remained neutral because they were not sure about the necessity of communication in building personal relationships. In addition, only a small number of comments are not in favor, which proves that most people realize that the success of communication is connecting and creating relationships.

Moreover, effective communication is perceived by students as embodying attributes of confidence, clarity, and persuasiveness in speech. More than half of the respondents, accounting for 53.3%, strongly agreed with this notion, while 34.8% expressed agreement. This information shows that most of the students surveyed value this perspective. A minority, representing 8.4%, maintained a neutral stance on the matter, showing hesitation in their thinking, with minimal disagreement observed at 2.6% and strong disagreement at 0.6%. The minority of people who disagree show indifference or disinterest in the issue.

Overall, the students' responses highlight the multifaceted nature of effective communication and its significance in facilitating clear, meaningful, and impactful exchanges of information. These findings underscore the importance of effective communication skills in various contexts and emphasize the role of communication in connecting individuals, sharing ideas, and building relationships.

4.1.3 Communicative activities in English classes

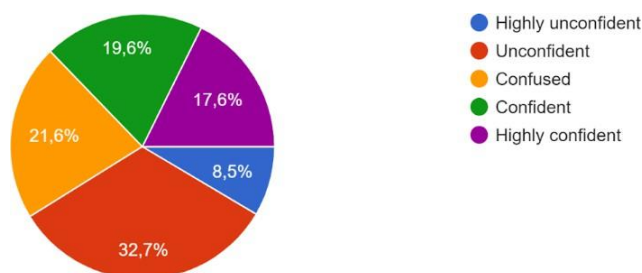


Chart 4.7: Students' feelings when participating in communication activities

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The pie chart 4.7 illustrates the English-major freshmen' feelings when taking part in communication activities that require speaking English at IUH in 2024. Overall, it is clear that the majority of first-year English majors feel completely lacking in confidence when asked to use English in class, whereas a small number of students say they feel extremely confident when communicating in English. This clearly indicates a feeling of insecurity among first-year English majors, which can stem from many factors, such as limited vocabulary, insufficient fluency, or worry about making mistakes. The second position took up 21,6% of students who were confused when speaking English. This represents a significant portion of students experiencing uncertainty or difficulty expressing themselves effectively. Besides, the number of students impressed with confidence was nearly 19,6%. On the other hand, students were also highly unconfident when exchanging information in English, likely due to a lack of vocabulary or probably limited fluency. In conclusion, first-year English students often feel unconfident when communicating in English during classes.

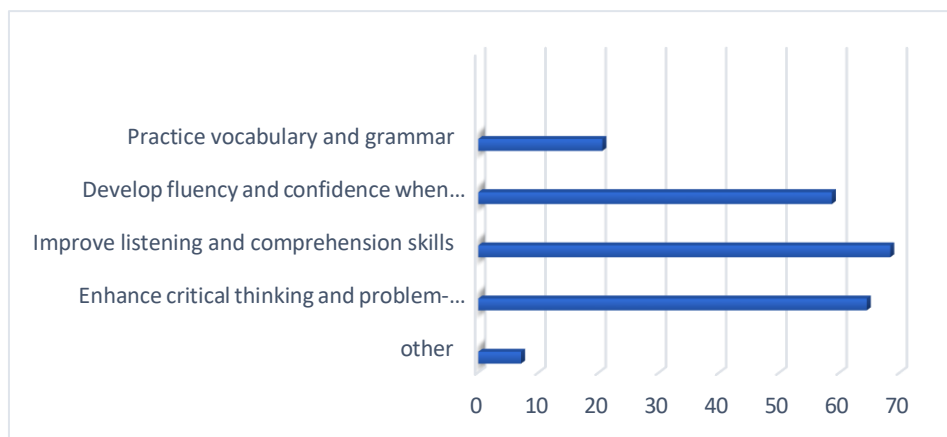


Chart 4.8: Communication's aspects contribute the most to students' language learning

Bar chart 4.8 shows the features of exchanging information through voice, which will improve students' language learning at IUH in 2024. The biggest contribution that helps students learn to acquire language better is improving students' listening and comprehension skills. This emphasizes the importance of listening and processing information, showing that students value activities that expose them to spoken language and promote comprehension. 64.5% of surveyed students said that improving their thinking and problem-solving abilities is the way students learn English. This finding shows that students highly value cognitive skills and the promotion of critical thinking in the context of language acquisition. Besides, students' opinion that developing fluency and confidence in speaking is the most important aspect of communication in their language learning journey takes up 58.7%. Among the students surveyed, only a small number of students agreed that practicing vocabulary and grammar contributes to communicative activities in language learning. This shows that although not a notable aspect, students still recognize the value of their own linguistic accuracy and vocabulary acquisition. On the other hand, 7.1% of the total students had different opinions. In short, the majority of students think that improving listening comprehension skills is the most important thing. This greatly contributes to providing information for teachers to design appropriate lessons to meet the needs and interests of students.

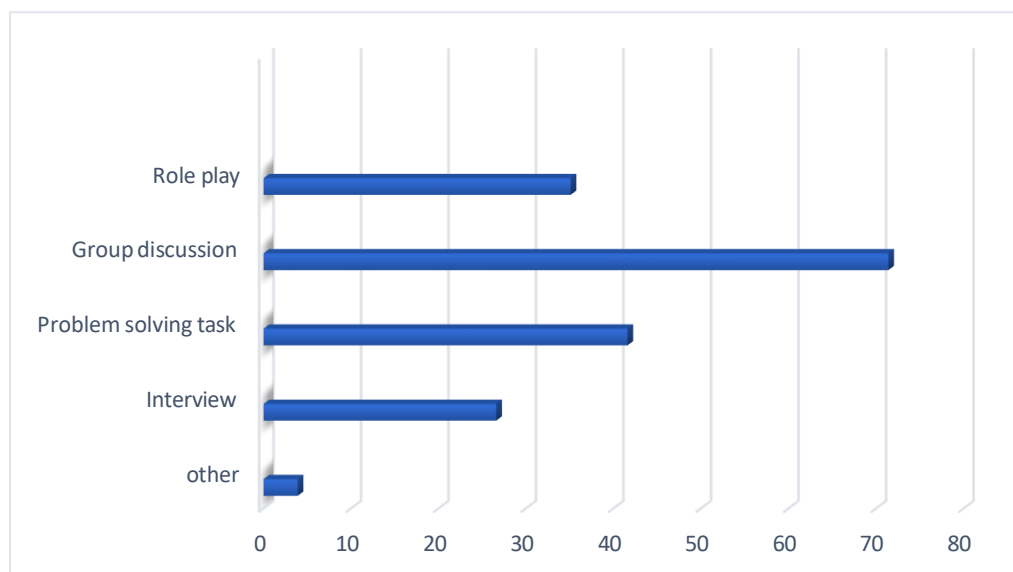


Chart 4.9: Communication activities are interesting for improving English skills.

Chart 4.9 provides information about the activities that students find interesting to improve their English skills at IUH in 2024. Overall, group discussions are the activities that students find most interesting in improving their English skills, at nearly 71.4%. Students appreciate the learning experience of group work, which allows them to actively engage in dialogue with their classmates. Furthermore, problem solving and role playing are the next two activities that many students pay attention to, 41.6% and 35.1%, respectively. Although a significant portion of students found problem-solving tasks engaging, role-playing was also an activity that students found enjoyable. Besides, interview activities also account for 26.6% compared to other activities. This percentage is relatively lower than other activities, although interviews provide many opportunities for authentic communication. On the other hand, 3.9% of students also think that there are many other activities that bring more excitement to students. In summary, these findings highlight students' varying levels of interest in different communication activities aimed at improving their English skills.

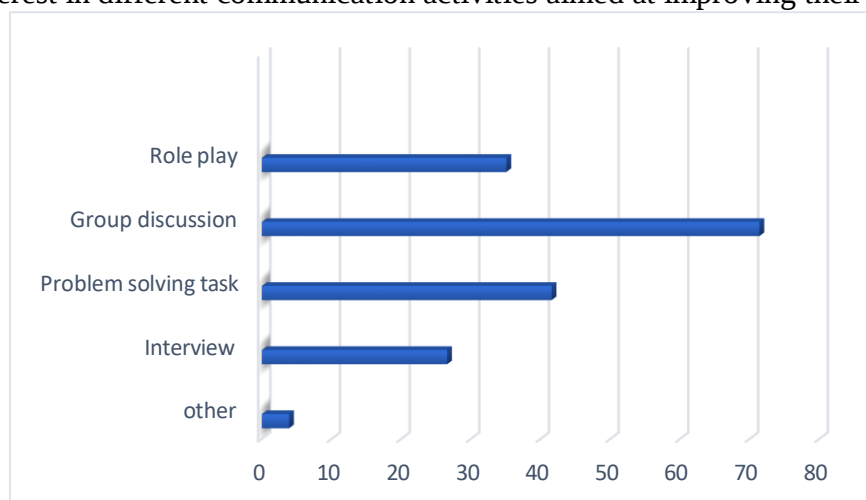


Chart 4.10: Communication activities help students improve their English speaking skills

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Chart 4.10 represents communication activities to improve the English skills of students at IUH in 2024. In this chart, the activity that students are most interested in is a group discussion, with 69.7%. The high rate of students approving of group discussion emphasizes its popularity and effectiveness in fostering speaking ability. The second most chosen figure is problem solving tasks, accounting for 38.1%. Besides, role playing activity account for a significant amount, approximately 31.6%. On the other hand, when the majority of students choose the above activities, interviews still account for a small percentage of students' choices. Although fewer students favor interviews over other activities, they are still valuable in practicing speaking. Besides, some students have different activities than those specified in the survey. In short, this survey shows that although other activities still improve students' English skills, the activity that students are most interested in is still group discussion.

4.1.4 The Reasons first language is used in speaking classes

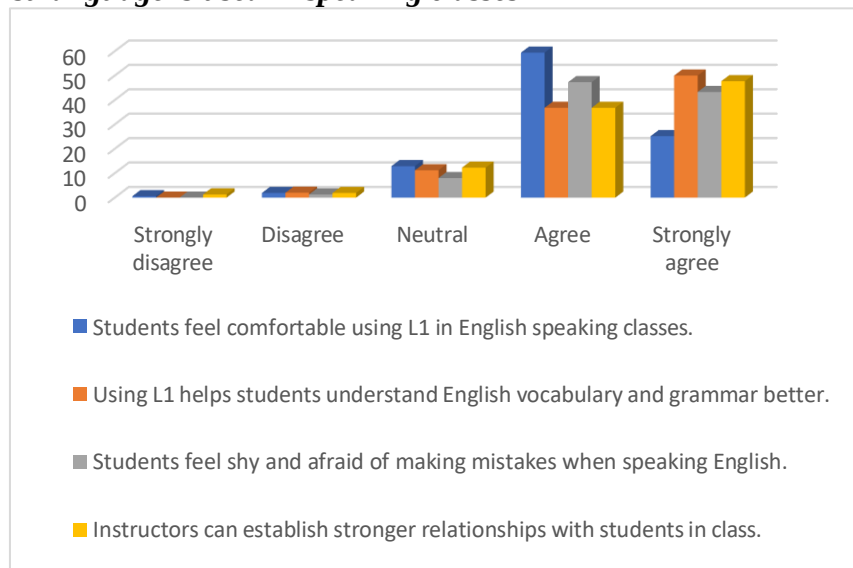


Chart 4.11: The reasons the first language is used in speaking classes.

Chart 4.11 shows various views about students feeling comfortable using their mother tongue in English-speaking classes. The majority of respondents, comprising 59.4% agreeing and 25.2% strongly agreeing, indicate that students feel comfortable using their mother tongue in English-speaking classes. However, the number of people who strongly disagree and disagree with this opinion accounts for the lowest percentage, only 2.5%. In addition, about 12.9% of students expressed a neutral opinion about whether they would feel comfortable using their mother tongue in English-speaking classes. This suggests that a significant portion of students prefer using their native language for communication, possibly due to familiarity and comfort.

Furthermore, this chart illustrates the views of the students that using their mother tongue helps them understand English vocabulary and grammar better. The data reveals that a considerable proportion of respondents, with 36.8% agreeing and 50% strongly agreeing, believe that using the mother tongue aids students in better understanding English vocabulary and grammar. On the contrary, there are still some opinions that completely disagree with this opinion. However, these opinions only account for a very small number compared to the total number of students surveyed, specifically only 2%. Additionally, 11.2% were neutral, suggesting there may be disagreement or uncertainty about their views. Overall, the statistics reveal that students have a strong preference for utilizing their mother tongue to help them comprehend English vocabulary and grammar. While a tiny fraction indicates dissent or indifference, the vast majority of students support the strategy, indicating a broad conviction in its usefulness for language acquisition.

Moreover, the bar chart describes students' views that they are hesitant and fearful of making errors when speaking English. A significant number, 47.3%, agree, and 43.3% strongly agree, indicating that students' shyness and fear of making errors influence the usage of their first language in speaking lessons. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who disagree is relatively low, at 1.3%, which indicates that a negligible fraction of students firmly believe that such emotions do not influence language use. In addition, 8% of students continue to hold a neutral position. This demonstrates how language anxiety may undermine students' confidence while using English in particular. In conclusion, the statistics indicate that students recognize the influence of shyness and anxiety about making mistakes in their language use in speaking classes. While a tiny fraction indicates dissent or neutrality, the vast majority of pupils support the viewpoint, demonstrating the ubiquitous significance of these emotions in language learning settings.

Finally, the chart shows students' views of whether teachers might build stronger ties with them in class. Based on the surveys, the majority of respondents, including 36.8% who agreed and 47.7% who strongly agreed, believe that utilizing the first language helps teachers build closer ties with students in class. Nonetheless, roughly 3.2% of students disagree with the notion. This suggests that a small fraction of students firmly believe that language use does not significantly impact the instructor-student relationship. In addition, about 12.3% of students expressed a neutral opinion regarding lecturers utilizing their mother tongue to build deeper interactions with them in class. Overall, statistics indicate that students are increasingly aware of the influence of utilizing their native language on the instructor-student connection in speaking sessions. While a minority indicates disagreement or neutrality, the vast majority of students support the idea, highlighting the perceived importance of language use in establishing greater ties between lecturers and students.

4.1.5 Advantages of using mother tongue in English speaking classes

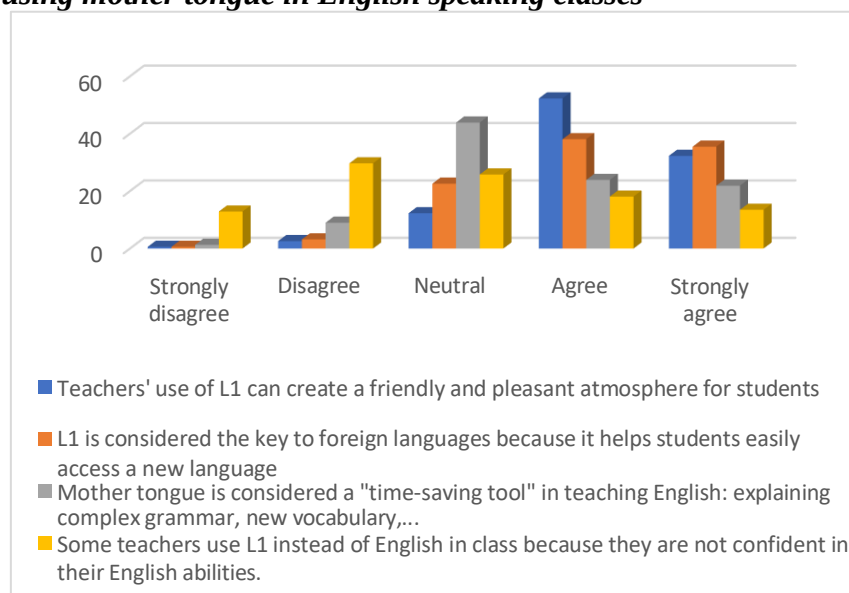


Chart 4.12: Advantages of using L1 in English speaking classes.

Bar chart 4.12 illustrates students' level of approval of teachers' use of L1 to create a sociable and pleasing atmosphere for students. Overall, more than half of the students strongly agreed with the idea that teachers' use of L1 fosters an atmosphere for students. Besides, 32.3% of students also agree with this opinion. The majority of students who strongly agree or agree with this option can see using L1 as enhancing

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communication, promoting relationships between teachers and students and creating a comfortable learning environment. On the other hand, a small number of students expressed their disagreement and strong disagreement with this view. In addition, about 12.3% of students expressed a neutral opinion regarding the opinion of teachers' L1 use in the classroom atmosphere. In conclusion, while the majority of students recognize teachers' use of L1 as beneficial for creating a friendly and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, there exists a notable subgroup that hold a neutral view establish or disagree on this issue.

Furthermore, this chart shows students' level of approval of viewing their mother tongue as a time-saving tool, especially in teaching grammar and new vocabulary. Students' neutral opinion about the native language being a time-saving tool accounts for 43.9%. This suggests that this opinion makes them feel hesitant about using their home language in the classroom. Besides, the number of survey participants completely agreed and agreed with this opinion, with percentages of 21.9% and 23.9% respectively. On the contrary, there are still a few opinions that completely disagree and disagree with this opinion. However, these opinions only account for a very small number compared to the total number of students surveyed.

Finally, the chart also describes various views about how some teachers often use their mother tongue in English classes because they are not confident in their language abilities. The survey showed that the majority of students did not agree with this opinion. However, the number of people who completely disagree with this opinion accounts for the lowest percentage, followed by those who completely agree, accounting for 13.5%. Furthermore, the number of people with an agreed and neutral opinion maintained the approximate percentage, which is 25.8% and 18.1%.

4.1.6 The disadvantages associated with excessive mother tongue usage in English classes and English-speaking classes.

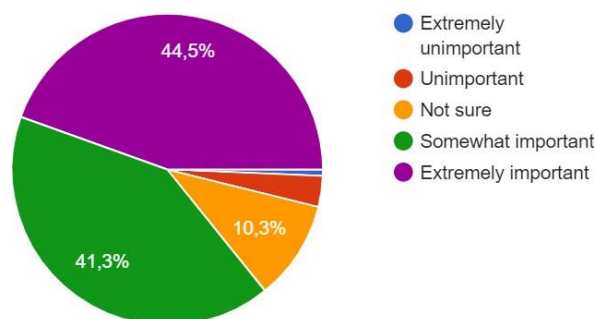


Chart 4.13: Teachers encourage students to use English in discussion activities in classes

The pie chart 4.13 reveals diverse perspectives on the importance of teachers encouraging English use in class discussions. While 44.5% consider it extremely important, indicating strong endorsement for this practice, 41.3% find it somewhat important. In contrast, only 3.2% view it as unimportant, with 0.6% deeming it extremely unimportant. Additionally, 10.3% express uncertainty. These varied opinions highlight the complexity of attitudes toward language learning strategies, underscoring the need for flexible pedagogical approaches to accommodate diverse student preferences and learning styles.

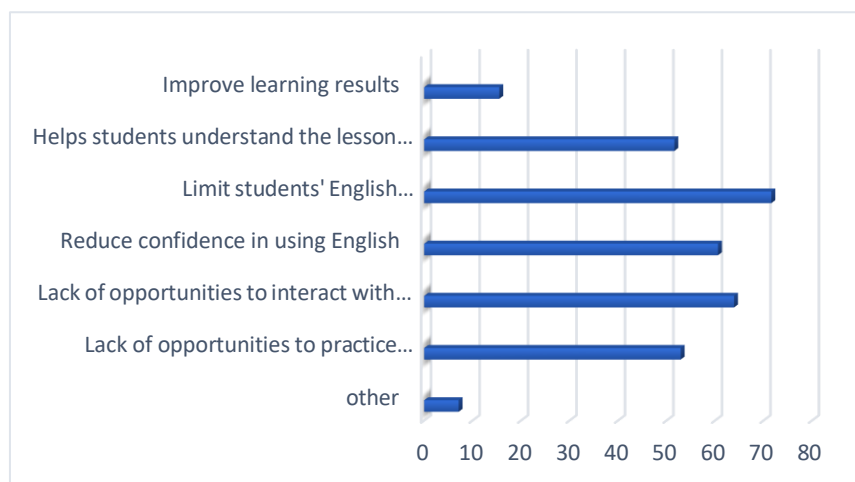


Chart 4.14: Effects of excessive use of L1 in English classes

The bar chart 4.14 illustrates the impact of excessive L1 usage in English classes on language acquisition; the findings unveil varied perspectives. While a minority (15.5%) perceive it as enhancing learning outcomes, a substantial majority highlight adverse effects. Specifically, 51.6% acknowledge its potential to aid comprehension of lessons, suggesting a nuanced perspective. However, a significant portion (71.6%) express concern about its detrimental impact on students' English communication abilities, echoing apprehensions about proficiency development. Moreover, a considerable proportion (60.6%) cite reduced confidence in using English, indicative of potential psychological barriers stemming from overreliance on L1. Additionally, 63.9% and 52.9% lament the lack of opportunities to interact with English and practice vocabulary and grammar, respectively, underscoring the importance of immersive learning environments. The presence of a minority (9%) indicating "Other" reasons highlights the complexity of this issue, warranting further investigation into nuanced perspectives. These findings underscore the need for balanced language instruction strategies that prioritize immersive English language environments while addressing individual learning needs and preferences.

4.1.7 The solutions to minimize the use of L1 in English speaking classes

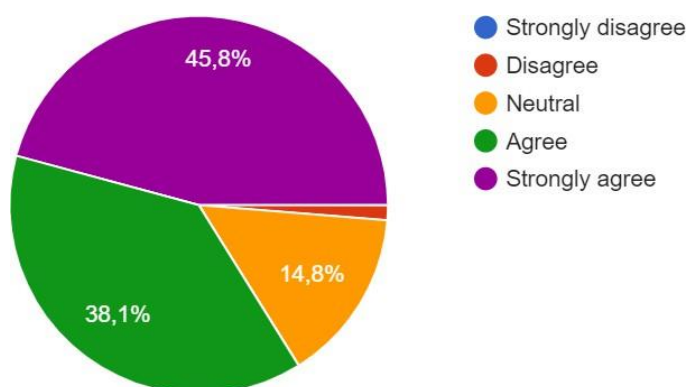


Chart 4.15: Lecturers and students should minimize the use of L1 during English lessons to improve students' language ability.

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The pie chart 4.15 illustrates the perspectives of both lecturers and students on the view that minimizing first language (L1) use in English sessions might help students develop their language skills. The majority of responders concurred with this viewpoint. Specifically, 45.8% strongly agree, and 38.1% agree. This overwhelming support demonstrates a broad conviction in the benefits of lowering L1 use to enhance language abilities. Only 1.3% of respondents disagreed with this plan. Furthermore, 14.8% of respondents remained neutral on the subject. In conclusion, the statistics demonstrate a significant consensus among instructors and students in favor of reducing L1 usage in English sessions to promote language competency. These findings give useful suggestions for educators and curriculum makers looking to improve language learning results.

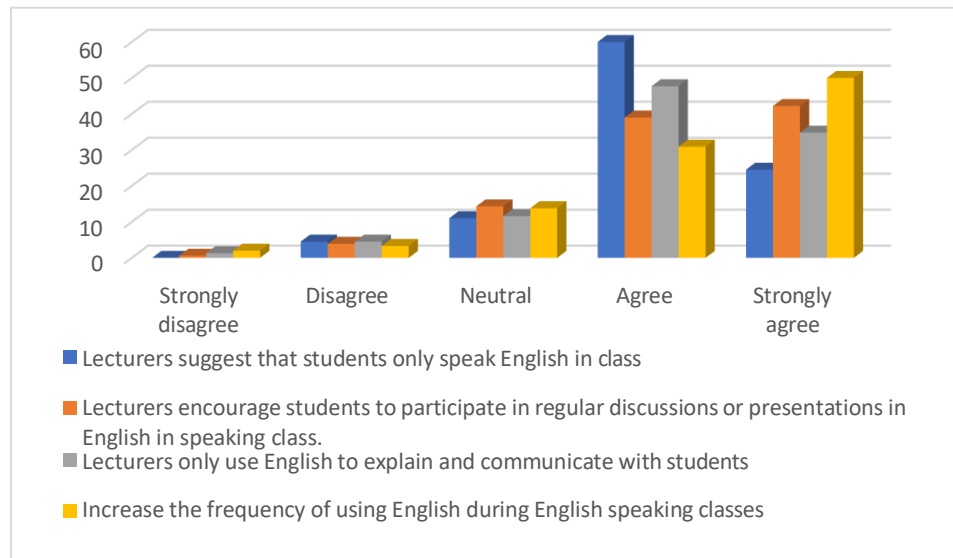


Chart 4.16: The solution to minimize the use of L1 in English speaking classes.

Bar chart 4.16 shows the view that lecturers suggest you should exclusively speak English. Based on the surveys, the majority of respondents, including 60%, agreed, and 24.5% strongly agreed with this advice, demonstrating substantial support for the idea that studying English promotes language acquisition. Meanwhile, 11% were neutral, implying that there may be disagreement or conflict among a small minority of pupils. However, just 4.5% of respondents disagreed, and no one strongly opposed the proposed approach. In summary, the chart's analysis shows substantial support for the advice that students should speak only English in class to decrease their mother tongue speaking. These remarks emphasize the importance of studying English as an essential method for boosting language acquisition and success in the speaking classroom.

Besides, the bar chart shows students' views on lecturers, encouraging them to engage in regular conversations or presentations in English during speaking lessons. According to the data, the majority of students agree with the above opinion, specifically 42.2% who strongly agree and 39% who agree that lecturers encouraging students to participate in discussions or presentations regularly in English is an important and effective solution. This shows a high level of support for this approach within the student community, emphasizing the need to develop communication skills and practical applications. In contrast, a very small percentage of students, approximately 0.6%, strongly disagreed, and 3.9% disagreed with this solution, suggesting that it was generally well received. However, it is worth noting that 14.3% remained neutral on the effectiveness of this solution, indicating some uncertainty or hesitation in their opinion. Overall, the chart highlights the widespread endorsement of encouraging students to participate in

discussions or presentations in English as a viable strategy for reducing native language speaking in the spoken classroom, with minimal protests from students.

Moreover, the chart reflects students' views on lecturers who only use English to explain and communicate with their students. This strategy pushes lecturers to communicate solely in English with their students. The statistics demonstrate that a considerable majority of 47.7% agree and 34.8% strongly agree with this proposal, demonstrating faculty unanimity on the significance of building an inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, 11.6% are neutral, implying the likelihood of disagreement or conflict among a small minority of students. However, it is worth noting that 4.5% disagree and 1.3% strongly disagree, indicating possible obstacles or doubts about this strategy. In conclusion, the findings show a strong trend towards supporting English as the only language of teaching and communication in the spoken classroom. While a tiny minority disagrees or remains neutral, the vast majority of students support this idea. This provides a strong mandate for applying techniques to limit mother tongue speaking and boost the presence of the English language in speaking classes, which may lead to improved language learning and competency among students.

Finally, the chart illustrates students' views toward increasing the frequency of English used in speaking classes. This proposal recommends that English be used more frequently in speaking classes. The findings reveal overwhelmingly positive support, with 30.9% agreeing and 50% strongly agreeing with the idea. Surprisingly, 13.8% remain neutral on this subject, implying a lack of agreement or dispute among a small subset of participants. Furthermore, 3.3% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree, reflecting recognition of the correlation between exposure and language proficiency. Overall, the statistics show overwhelming support for increasing English usage frequency during lessons as a way to reduce mother tongue speaking in English-speaking classrooms. While a minority disagrees or remains neutral, the vast majority of students support this method. This implies that there is considerable agreement on the effectiveness of this technique in boosting English language learning and proficiency among students.

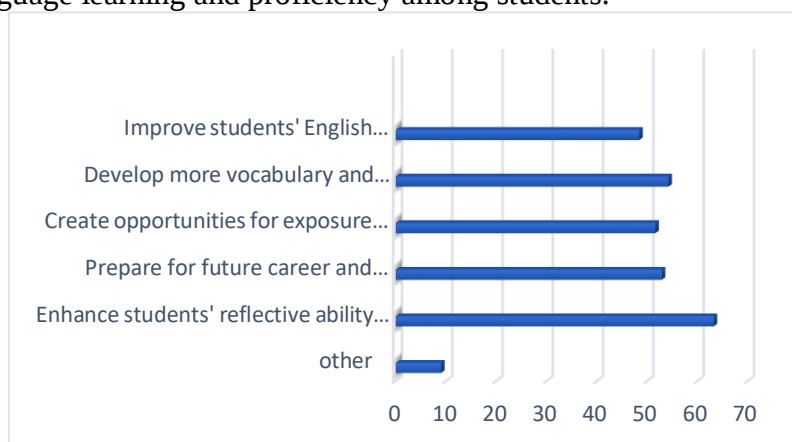


Chart 4.17: The reasons that students should use English during English speaking classes.

Bar chart 4.17 describes why students should use English instead of Vietnamese during English-speaking lessons. The highest response rate of 63.2% prioritized improving students' ability to reflect in English. Next, 54.2% of people chose to develop more vocabulary and grammar as a rationale for using English in speaking classes. Besides, the majority of respondents consider using English in speaking classes to be very important to prepare students for academic and career opportunities in the future, which will account for 52.9%. Furthermore, a significant proportion of 51.6% of respondents emphasized the importance of using English to create opportunities for students to interact with and understand British culture. In addition,

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48.4% of respondents cited improving English communication skills as the main reason for using English in speaking classes. Finally, a small percentage (11.6%) chose other reasons to use English in speaking classes. Although not clearly defined, these additional reasons may include various factors such as improving pronunciation, increasing confidence, or facilitating cross-cultural communication.

In conclusion, the bar chart analysis shows the many benefits of students using English in speaking classes. From improving communication skills to preparing for future opportunities to improving cultural understanding, these data highlight the importance of using English in promoting the well-rounded development of students. These findings highlight the importance of integrating English immersion strategies into educational practices to support students' linguistic, cognitive, and cultural development.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Reliability of research results

We surveyed 155 freshman English majors at IUH. Following a survey and data collection, we identified many challenges that students typically encounter when learning to speak English, and we then gave applicable solutions to help students minimize the use of their native tongue in the English-speaking classroom. Based on our findings, we believe that this survey is extremely reliable and highlights the effects of students struggling to learn to speak English.

4.2.2 The discussion of the results of the research and other previous research

The study reaffirms what previous research has shown about the importance of speaking skills in various aspects of life (Rao, 2019; Brown & Yuke, 1983); (Bueno, Madrid, & McLaren, 2006; Tripathy, 2020). Most participants recognized the significance of communication skills for daily life, study, and global integration. This highlights the need for effective communication in different situations and emphasizes the importance of learning and practicing English more and more to achieve these goals.

Additionally, our findings align with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) proposed by Richards (Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia & Paredes, 2019). Participants preferred activities like group discussions, problem-solving tasks, role-playing, and interviews to improve their speaking skills. This supports the idea that interactive and task-based approaches help learners acquire language by giving them meaningful opportunities to use it (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Hedge, 2008).

However, our study also sheds light on the complex relationship between using the mother tongue and learning English. While using the native language in English lessons can help students understand better and learn (Nhat, 2018; Silvani, 2014), relying too much on it may hold back students' progress in English (Zeebaree, 2021; Sharma, 2006). This suggests a need to find a balance between using the mother tongue as a teaching tool and encouraging students to immerse themselves in English to improve their language skills. Beside that, using simple instructions and un-complex structures when guiding and communicating with students inside class is very necessary for students to understand and to be self-confident to use English in their classes.

Furthermore, our study emphasizes the role of teachers in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Participants responded positively to teachers who promote English use, encourage conversations, and build a sense of community in class (Carless, 2008; Tosuncuoglu, 2012). In contrast, students also tend to use first language in communicating with classmates and answering the questions from their teachers. For that reason, it is really vital for teachers to create English-usage environment so that students are encourage to use the target language to brainstorming, discussing and reperenting their ideas and arguments every classes. This highlights the importance of the teacher-student relationship and how teaching strategies can impact students' language learning experiences and the usage of English regularly to improve their speaking skill.

Additionally, our research at IUH provides insights into English education in Vietnam. The research results reveal students' important insights into English communication skills and the challenges they face in developing their speaking ability. They emphasized the importance of English in global integration, highlighting its role in connecting people, accessing opportunities and understanding diverse cultures. They think that English is popular globally, so learning English will give them job opportunities with higher salaries or that this is a language that acts as a bridge between countries around the world during the integration process. Students also expressed the reasons why speaking skills cause many difficulties for learners, often due to lack of vocabulary and grammar, lack of confidence, not having an environment to practice English or other feelings. Furthermore, students find the ability to communicate effectively is important for conveying messages clearly, building relationships, and engaging listeners. Among the students surveyed, they believe that communication is a means to connect people, the foundation of all interactions, sharing ideas and emotions, promoting understanding and empathy, etc. Some people also believe that when communication attracts the listener, the speaker has succeeded in conveying the messages he wants to convey. In addition, students also offered valuable suggestions to reduce the use of first language (L1) in English-speaking classrooms, including creating an English-only environment, trying to think in English, and engaging in reflective discussions. Moreover, they also offer suggestions for teachers, including setting rules and encouraging students to use English, implementing punishments and rewards, and promoting enriching experiences.

In conclusion, based on our findings and comparison with existing literature, we can draw several conclusions. Firstly, the first language has a significant impact on students' English-speaking skills, both positively and negatively. While using the first language can help in certain contexts, relying too much on it can hinder language learning. Secondly, effective strategies to reduce the use of the first language in English classrooms, such as increasing English usage and creating a supportive learning environment, are crucial for improving language proficiency. Finally, addressing students' attitudes towards English usage, including language anxiety, is important for creating a positive learning environment conducive to language development.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our research has provided valuable insights into the factors influencing students' usage of their mother tongue in English-speaking classes, the importance of utilizing the target language directly, and specific measures to minimize the usage of the source language in English-speaking classes. Through an in-depth analysis of survey data collected from freshmen English majors at IUH, we have shed light on various aspects of English language learning and teaching.

The research underscores the significance of effective communication skills in both academic and real-world contexts. Students' perceptions regarding the importance of communication skills for daily life, study, and global integration reaffirm the critical role of English proficiency in facilitating interpersonal interactions, accessing information, and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, students' preferences for communicative language teaching methods, such as group discussions and role-playing activities, highlight the importance of interactive and task-based approaches in promoting language acquisition.

Moreover, our research highlights the complex relationship between using the mother tongue and learning English. While students recognize the potential benefits of using their native language for comprehension

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and vocabulary acquisition, they also acknowledge the need to minimize its usage to enhance English language proficiency. This suggests the importance of finding a balance between leveraging the first language as a teaching tool and encouraging students to immerse themselves in English to improve their speaking abilities.

Furthermore, our research also emphasizes the pivotal role of teachers in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Students respond positively to teachers who promote English use, encourage active engagement, and build rapport with students. This underscores the significance of teacher-student relationships and the impact of teaching strategies on students' language learning experiences.

Overall, our research contributes to the ongoing discourse on English language education by providing insights into students' perspectives, challenges, and recommendations for improving English language learning outcomes. By addressing the specific questions raised at the beginning of our investigation, we have highlighted the importance of effective communication skills, the complexities of using the mother tongue in English-speaking classes, and the role of teachers in facilitating language learning. Moving forward, it is essential for educators and policymakers to consider these findings and implement evidence-based strategies to enhance English language instruction and support students' linguistic development.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from our study regarding the factors influencing students' usage of their mother tongue in English-speaking classes, the importance of utilizing the target language directly, and specific measures to minimize the usage of the source language in English-speaking classes, several suggestions can be proposed to address the identified issues and improve English language learning outcomes for freshmen at IUH.

Enhancing Language Immersion Programs would involve implementing immersive language programs that create English-only environments within the classroom. This could include organizing activities, discussions, and presentations entirely in English, providing students with ample opportunities to practice their language skills in authentic contexts. Additionally, immersive language experiences outside the classroom, such as language clubs, cultural events, and study abroad programs, can further reinforce language acquisition and cultural understanding.

Teacher training and professional development are crucial for enhancing pedagogical skills and strategies to promote target language use among instructors. Workshops, seminars, and mentoring programs focused on communicative language teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and effective language assessment practices can empower teachers to create engaging and supportive learning environments conducive to language acquisition.

Integrating Technology-Enhanced Language Learning can enrich English language instruction and engage students in meaningful language learning experiences. Interactive multimedia materials, online language learning platforms, and virtual communication tools offer students diverse opportunities to practice their language skills, collaborate with peers, and access authentic language resources beyond the confines of the classroom.

Fostering a Positive Language Learning Environment is essential for alleviating students' anxiety and fear of making errors when speaking English. Creating a supportive and inclusive classroom culture that values linguistic diversity and encourages risk-taking can boost students' confidence and motivation to actively participate in English-speaking activities. Strategies such as peer support groups, language buddies, and positive reinforcement can contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.

5.2 Study Limitations

While our study offers valuable insights into the factors influencing students' use of their mother tongue in English-speaking classes, several limitations should be noted. Firstly, the sample size and composition primarily comprised freshmen English majors at IUH, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other student populations or educational contexts. This limitation stems from practical constraints such as resource availability and access to a more diverse participant pool. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data collected through surveys may introduce response bias and social desirability bias, potentially impacting the accuracy and reliability of the results.

Furthermore, the study's sole use of quantitative survey methodology may have overlooked nuanced perspectives and contextual factors that qualitative methods could have captured. This limitation highlights the trade-off between efficiency and depth in data collection. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study limited the examination of longitudinal trends or causal relationships, constraining our ability to draw conclusions about changes over time or establish causal pathways between variables.

Despite these limitations, our study contributes valuable insights to the literature on language use in English-speaking classes and identifies areas for future research and intervention. By acknowledging these limitations, researchers can build upon our findings to develop a more comprehensive understanding of language learning processes and inform evidence-based practices in language education.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could adopt qualitative methods to delve deeper into students' language use behaviors and attitudes in English-speaking classes, exploring factors influencing language choices and identifying barriers and facilitators to language learning. Additionally, comparative studies across different educational settings and cultures, alongside longitudinal studies tracking students' language learning trajectories, would provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of language acquisition. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can contribute to the advancement of knowledge in language education and inform the development of effective language teaching practices.

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