International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

Linguistic Factors Affecting English Speaking Skills among Second-Year English-Major Students: A Mixed-Methods Study

Linh Kieu Hoang Le[1], Long Thanh Nguyen[2]
[1,2] Faculty of Foreign languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, HCMC, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: This study investigated the relationships between vocabulary competence, grammatical competence, pronunciation competence, and self-perceived English-speaking skills among second-year English-major students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU), Vietnam. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 102 students, followed by semi-structured interviews with five selected participants. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were used to examine students' self-assessments, while thematic analysis explored their reported speaking difficulties. The results revealed positive perceptions of linguistic competence and speaking skills overall. Vocabulary competence showed the strongest correlation with overall self-perceived speaking skills (r = .502, p < .001), followed by grammatical competence (r = .492, p < .001) and pronunciation competence (r = .397, p < .001). Interview findings provided further insights into difficulties with lexical retrieval, grammatical processing, final consonant production, stress, intonation, and speaking confidence. These findings highlight the interconnected roles of linguistic resources in students' perceptions of oral communication. The study suggests that EFL instruction should integrate vocabulary development, communicative grammar practice, pronunciation training, and supportive speaking activities. However, because the quantitative measures were based on self-report, the findings indicate associations among perceived competencies rather than causal effects on objectively measured speaking performance.

KEYWORDS: English speaking skills, EFL, grammatical competence, pronunciation competence, vocabulary competence, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

English speaking proficiency is an important component of communicative competence in higher education, enabling learners to express ideas, participate in academic interactions, and prepare for professional communication. For students majoring in English, developing effective speaking skills is particularly important because oral communication forms a central part of their academic preparation and future career opportunities. However, successful speaking requires more than knowledge of grammatical rules or individual words. Speakers must retrieve vocabulary, construct grammatical utterances, and produce intelligible speech while processing and responding to information in real time.

Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are fundamental dimensions of linguistic competence. Vocabulary knowledge provides the lexical resources needed to express intended meanings, while grammatical knowledge supports the organization of words into meaningful utterances. Pronunciation, including segmental features and suprasegmental elements such as stress, rhythm, and intonation, contributes to the comprehensibility of spoken communication. These dimensions are interrelated and may jointly shape learners' experiences of speaking in a second or foreign language (Levelt, 1989; Kormos, 2006; Nation, 2013).

Despite the importance of these linguistic resources, EFL learners may experience difficulty applying their knowledge during spontaneous oral communication. Learners who know a word may struggle to retrieve it quickly; those who understand grammatical rules may have difficulty applying them accurately under time pressure; and pronunciation problems may affect the clarity of their intended messages. Such difficulties can contribute to hesitation, interrupted speech, and reduced confidence during speaking activities. Research on second-language speech production therefore needs to consider both the linguistic resources learners perceive themselves to possess and the difficulties they encounter when using those resources in communicative situations.

At the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU), second-year English-major students are expected to develop their oral communication beyond foundational language knowledge. Nevertheless, the thesis identifies continuing challenges involving vocabulary retrieval, grammatical control, and pronunciation. Although previous studies have

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

investigated individual linguistic dimensions in EFL contexts, examining vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation together may provide a more integrated account of how students perceive their speaking abilities in this particular educational setting.

The present study addresses this issue through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. A questionnaire completed by 102 second-year English-major students was followed by semi-structured interviews with five selected participants. The quantitative phase examined the relationships between students' self-perceived linguistic competence and self-perceived speaking skills, while the qualitative phase explored how students described their speaking difficulties and experiences.

The study addresses two research questions:

1. To what extent are vocabulary knowledge, grammatical competence, and pronunciation competence related to second-year English-major students perceived English speaking skills?
2. How do students describe their perceived difficulties regarding vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in relation to their English-speaking performance in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility?

By integrating survey and interview findings, the study aims to provide a context-specific account of the relationships between linguistic competence and perceived speaking skills among Vietnamese university EFL learners. The findings may inform the design of speaking activities that combine lexical development, grammatical practice, pronunciation instruction, and opportunities for supported oral interaction. The study does not, however, attempt to establish causal relationships or measure students objectively assessed speaking proficiency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. English speaking skills and communicative competence

Speaking is a productive language skill that requires speakers to formulate and convey meaning in real time. Unlike written production, oral communication often allows limited time for planning, revision, and correction. Consequently, successful speaking involves the coordination of linguistic knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge under communicative time constraints (Luoma, 2004; Thornbury, 2005).

Speaking proficiency can be examined through different dimensions. In this study, speaking skills are operationalized through accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. Accuracy concerns the appropriateness and correctness of linguistic forms, including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Fluency concerns the ability to maintain speech with relatively natural continuity and without excessive hesitation. Comprehensibility refers to the degree to which listeners can understand a speaker's intended meaning. Although related, these dimensions are not interchangeable: a speaker may communicate an understandable message while making grammatical errors or speaking with frequent pauses.

The study draws on the communicative competence framework developed by Canale and Swain (1980) and extended by Canale (1983). This framework emphasizes that effective communication involves grammatical or linguistic competence alongside sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. The present study focuses on the linguistic dimension, specifically vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, while recognizing that actual speaking performance may also be shaped by other communicative and contextual factors.

2.2. Vocabulary competence and speaking skills

Vocabulary competence involves more than recognizing word meanings. It includes knowledge of word forms, meanings, usage, and the ability to retrieve appropriate lexical items when communicating. Nation (2013) distinguishes several dimensions of vocabulary knowledge, while models of speech production emphasize the role of lexical access in formulating spoken utterances (Levelt, 1989; Kormos, 2006).

During spontaneous speech, delayed lexical retrieval can interrupt the formulation of ideas and result in hesitation, repetition, or reformulation. A sufficiently accessible vocabulary may help speakers express intended meanings more precisely and sustain the flow of communication. Vocabulary may therefore be related to both perceived accuracy and fluency, while also supporting comprehensibility by enabling speakers to select appropriate words.

However, knowing a word and retrieving it quickly during interaction are different aspects of lexical competence. Learners may recognize vocabulary during reading or listening but struggle to access it during spontaneous speaking. The present study therefore examines students' perceived vocabulary competence in relation to their perceived speaking skills, rather than treating vocabulary knowledge as an independently tested proficiency measure.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

2.3. Grammatical competence and speaking skills

Grammatical competence concerns knowledge of the rules and structures used to construct meaningful utterances. In oral communication, speakers must select and organize grammatical forms while also attending to meaning, interaction, and time constraints. As a result, knowledge of grammar rules does not necessarily guarantee consistent grammatical accuracy in spontaneous speech.

Grammatical competence is particularly relevant to accuracy because it supports the construction of structurally appropriate utterances. It may also be associated with fluency when familiar grammatical patterns can be accessed with limited conscious effort. Conversely, extensive monitoring of grammatical correctness may interrupt the flow of speech, especially when learners are uncertain about tense, agreement, or sentence structure.

Within the framework of communicative competence, grammar provides an important foundation for conveying meaning, but it does not independently account for all aspects of speaking proficiency (Canale & Swain, 1980). This distinction is relevant to the current study because students' self-perceived grammatical competence may be associated with their confidence in speaking without necessarily reflecting their actual grammatical accuracy during oral performance.

2.4. Pronunciation competence and speaking skills

Pronunciation includes segmental features, such as vowels and consonants, as well as suprasegmental features, including word stress, sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation. These features contribute to the intelligibility and comprehensibility of spoken language. Pronunciation difficulties may make words harder for listeners to recognize, even when the speaker knows the intended vocabulary and has constructed an appropriate grammatical sentence.

Studies discussed in the thesis identify several pronunciation challenges among EFL learners, including unfamiliar phonemes, consonant clusters, word-final consonants, stress patterns, and intonation (Doff, 1988; Kelly, 2000). In the Vietnamese EFL context, difficulties producing English final consonants have also been highlighted in previous research (Le, 2022). Such difficulties may affect the realization of grammatical endings as well as the intelligibility of individual words.

Pronunciation competence is therefore expected to be relevant to comprehensibility and may also relate to fluency when uncertainty about sound production leads to hesitation or self-correction. Nevertheless, the strength of this relationship may vary across learners and communicative contexts. The present study examines students' perceptions of pronunciation competence and speaking skills rather than assessing their pronunciation through recorded speech or independent ratings.

2.5. Relationships among vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking

Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation operate in combination during oral communication. Speech production requires speakers to formulate an intended message, retrieve lexical items, organize them into grammatical structures, and realize those structures through speech sounds. Models of speech production and second-language processing therefore provide a theoretical basis for examining the relationships among these linguistic dimensions (Levelt, 1989; Kormos, 2006).

The relationship among the dimensions is not necessarily straightforward. For example, a learner may know the correct word but pronounce it in a way that makes it difficult to recognize. Similarly, an omitted or unclear word-final consonant may affect the perception of a grammatical ending. Limited lexical access may also increase hesitation and make it more difficult to maintain a fluent sentence structure. These examples illustrate how difficulties in one linguistic dimension may coincide with difficulties in another.

The current study brings the three dimensions together within one analytical framework and examines their correlations with overall self-perceived speaking skills. Its conceptual foundation is the linguistic component of communicative competence, while the interview phase provides contextual information about how students experience the use of linguistic resources during oral interaction.

2.6. Previous research and research gap

Previous studies have examined the contribution of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to EFL speaking from different perspectives. Research on grammatical competence has documented difficulties such as subject–verb agreement errors in learners' spoken production (Sabarniati & Zulkarnain, 2020). Studies of vocabulary and oral communication have examined how lexical limitations may constrain learners' ability to express meanings. Pronunciation research has likewise highlighted the importance of sound production, stress, and intonation for intelligibility and comprehensibility.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

Research conducted in Vietnamese EFL settings has identified difficulties involving lexical resources, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation, including challenges associated with English final consonants (Le, 2022; Hoang, 2025). These findings establish the relevance of linguistic competence to speaking development. However, the studies reviewed in the thesis differ in their populations, research contexts, and analytical focus.

The present study addresses a more localized question by examining the relationships among self-perceived vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking skills within a single cohort of second-year English majors at NTTU. Its mixed-methods design combines correlations from a questionnaire with interview accounts of learners' experiences. The contribution is therefore not a claim that the role of linguistic competence has previously been overlooked, but a context-specific analysis that brings the three linguistic dimensions together and explores how students describe their associated difficulties.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed first to examine the relationships between students' self-perceived competence in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and their self-perceived English-speaking skills. A subsequent qualitative phase used semi-structured interviews to explore students' reported difficulties and provide contextual insight into the survey findings.

The design enabled the study to combine an overview of perceived relationships across the sample with more detailed accounts of learners' experiences during spontaneous oral communication. The qualitative findings were used to complement and interpret the quantitative patterns rather than to establish causal explanations.

3.2. Research setting and participants

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Vietnam. The quantitative phase involved 102 second-year undergraduate students majoring in English. For the qualitative phase, five students were purposively selected from survey respondents who had expressed willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. The selection sought to include students with different self-perceived competence profiles across the constructs examined.

The quantitative sample provided the basis for the descriptive and correlational analyses, while the five interviews offered additional insight into students perceived speaking difficulties. Given that the participants came from one university and one year level, the findings should be interpreted in relation to this specific context rather than generalized to all Vietnamese EFL learners.

3.3. Research instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The quantitative instrument was a bilingual questionnaire administered through Google Forms. It consisted of 21 items organized into four subscales: vocabulary competence (Q1–Q5), grammatical competence (Q6–Q10), pronunciation competence (Q11–Q15), and self-perceived English-speaking skills (Q16–Q21). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale.

The speaking-skills subscale covered three dimensions: accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. Composite scores were calculated by averaging the items assigned to each construct. The overall speaking-skills score was calculated from the three speaking dimensions.

The questionnaire was developed with reference to the study's theoretical framework and relevant literature. Its bilingual presentation was intended to reduce possible misunderstandings of the items. The study measured students' self-perceptions; it did not include an independently scored speaking test or an objective assessment of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation.

3.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected students following the quantitative analysis. The interviews explored participants' experiences of using vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation during oral communication, including situations in which they found speaking difficult.

The interview data were intended to provide contextual explanations of the challenges reflected in students' questionnaire responses. They also allowed participants to describe issues that were not measured as independent variables in the survey, including anxiety during classroom speaking and concerns about negative evaluation.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

3.4. Data collection procedures

A pilot study involving ten first-year English-major students was conducted to examine the questionnaire before the main survey. The pilot reliability coefficients were .875 for vocabulary competence, .784 for grammatical competence, .756 for pronunciation competence, and .875 for self-perceived English-speaking skills. No questionnaire items were removed after the pilot.

The main questionnaire was administered online between September 9 and October 5. The survey link and QR code were shared through student communication channels. Participants received information about the study and were required to provide consent before proceeding. The questionnaire was presented in both English and Vietnamese.

After data screening, 102 valid responses were retained from 148 submissions. Following the quantitative analysis, five respondents were purposively selected for semi-structured online interviews conducted through Google Meet between October 7 and October 13. The interview phase was designed to explore participants' experiences of vocabulary retrieval, grammatical monitoring, pronunciation, and speaking challenges.

3.5. Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' self-perceived competence and speaking skills. Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire subscales. Pearson product–moment correlations were then calculated to examine the relationships between vocabulary competence, grammatical competence, pronunciation competence, and overall self-perceived speaking skills.

The qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring descriptions of students' speaking difficulties. The analysis focused on reported challenges in retrieving vocabulary, applying grammatical forms during spontaneous speech, producing pronunciation features, and managing speaking-related anxiety. The qualitative themes were then considered alongside the quantitative results to identify points of convergence and provide a more contextual interpretation of the findings.

Because both strands relied on participants' self-reports, the integrated analysis was interpreted as evidence of perceived competence and reported experience, not as direct evidence of objectively measured speaking performance.

3.6. Reliability, validity, and trustworthiness

The questionnaire was informed by the study's theoretical framework and previous literature, and it was piloted before the main data collection. Internal consistency was examined for the subscales rather than relying solely on a single coefficient for the entire questionnaire. The short length of some speaking-dimension subscales requires particular caution when interpreting reliability estimates.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on their experiences beyond the fixed questionnaire items. The integration of survey patterns and interview themes enabled the study to compare findings across the two data sources. Nevertheless, the small number of interviewees and the reliance on self-reported data limit the extent to which the qualitative themes can be treated as representative of the wider student population.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Relationships between linguistic competence and self-perceived speaking skills

The quantitative findings indicate that students' self-perceived competence in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation was positively associated with their self-perceived overall speaking skills. Vocabulary competence showed the strongest observed correlation ($r = .502$), ($p < .001$), followed closely by grammatical competence ($r = .492$), ($p < .001$). Pronunciation competence also showed a statistically significant positive correlation, although the coefficient was comparatively smaller ($r = .397$), ($p < .001$).

These findings suggest that students who rated their linguistic competence more positively also tended to rate their speaking abilities more positively. The relationship between vocabulary competence and speaking skills is consistent with the view that lexical access is important during real-time speech production (Levelt, 1989; Kormos, 2006). Speakers need to retrieve words that convey their intended meanings, and delays in retrieval may interrupt the flow of speech. The interview findings, in which students described difficulty remembering or accessing appropriate vocabulary during speaking, provide a contextual illustration of this challenge.

Grammatical competence showed a similarly substantial positive association with overall self-perceived speaking skills. This finding is consistent with the role of grammatical knowledge in constructing meaningful utterances and maintaining linguistic accuracy. However, the interview accounts indicate that applying grammatical rules during spontaneous communication can remain

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

difficult even when learners have studied those rules. The distinction between knowing a grammatical form and using it efficiently under time pressure is therefore important when interpreting students' self-assessments.

Pronunciation competence was also positively associated with self-perceived speaking skills. Its comparatively lower correlation does not mean that pronunciation is unimportant. Rather, it indicates that the observed relationship between pronunciation self-assessments and overall speaking self-assessments was weaker than the corresponding relationships for vocabulary and grammar in this sample. The interview findings provide further context, particularly through students' descriptions of difficulties with word-final consonants, stress, and intonation.

The three correlation coefficients should not be interpreted as a ranking of the causal importance of the linguistic factors. The differences among them were not tested directly, and all measures were based on self-report. The findings therefore support the conclusion that the three dimensions are associated with perceived speaking skills, but they do not establish that vocabulary has a statistically stronger effect than grammar or pronunciation, nor that improvements in any one dimension would necessarily produce a specific increase in actual speaking proficiency.

4.2. Students' perceived levels of linguistic competence and speaking skills

The descriptive findings provide additional insight into students' perceptions. Among the three linguistic constructs, grammatical competence received the highest mean rating (\(M = 3.62\), \(SD = .64\)), followed by vocabulary competence (\(M = 3.54\), \(SD = .64\)) and pronunciation competence (\(M = 3.51\), \(SD = .69\)). The overall speaking-skills mean was 3.62 (\(SD = .62\)).

Across the three speaking dimensions, comprehensibility received the highest mean score (\(M = 3.75\), \(SD = .77\)), followed by accuracy (\(M = 3.58\), \(SD = .75\)); fluency received the lowest (\(M = 3.53\), \(SD = .80\)). These figures indicate generally favorable self-assessments, while also pointing to areas in which students perceived more difficulty.

The relatively lower mean for fluency is compatible with the interview accounts of lexical retrieval problems and grammatical monitoring during spontaneous speech. When speakers need additional time to find words or check grammatical forms, they may experience interruptions in the flow of their speech. However, because the study did not analyze recorded speech or objectively measure pauses, the relationship between these reported difficulties and actual fluency remains an interpretation rather than a directly observed performance effect.

Similarly, the comparatively lower pronunciation mean suggests that students felt less confident about pronunciation than about grammar. The interview accounts concerning final consonants, stress, and intonation help contextualize this pattern. Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that students' generally positive self-assessments can coexist with specific concerns about the real-time use of linguistic knowledge.

4.3. Vocabulary retrieval and the development of fluency

The interview findings highlight the distinction between knowing vocabulary and being able to retrieve it during spontaneous communication. Participants described situations in which they knew what they wanted to express but had difficulty accessing the appropriate word quickly. Such experiences may lead to pauses, repetition, or reformulation and can make it harder to sustain a coherent message.

This finding is consistent with accounts of speech production that emphasize lexical retrieval as part of the process of formulating spoken utterances (Levelt, 1989; Kormos, 2006). It also suggests that vocabulary instruction should address not only the acquisition of word meanings but also the ability to use words and common expressions under communicative conditions.

Activities involving topic-based discussion, repeated retrieval of lexical items, and the use of formulaic expressions may provide opportunities for learners to practice accessing vocabulary in context. Paraphrasing tasks may also help learners maintain communication when a specific word is temporarily unavailable. These approaches are pedagogically plausible responses to the interview themes, although their effectiveness was not directly tested in the present study.

4.4. Grammatical monitoring during spontaneous speech

The interview accounts also suggest that students may find it difficult to monitor grammatical accuracy while speaking. Learners can be familiar with grammatical rules but still experience uncertainty when they must construct utterances quickly and simultaneously respond to an interlocutor. Excessive attention to grammatical form may also compete with the need to maintain the flow of communication.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

The positive correlation between grammatical competence and self-perceived speaking skills is consistent with the role of grammar in organizing meaningful utterances. At the same time, the interview data caution against equating perceived grammatical knowledge with consistently accurate spoken production.

For teaching practice, the findings support providing opportunities to use grammatical forms in meaningful communication rather than relying exclusively on explanation or isolated exercises. Role-plays, information-gap activities, and small-group discussions can give learners repeated opportunities to produce familiar grammatical patterns in context. The aim is not to eliminate attention to accuracy, but to help learners use grammatical resources more efficiently during communication.

4.5. Pronunciation and comprehensibility

Although pronunciation competence showed the smallest of the three observed correlations with overall self-perceived speaking skills, it remained significantly and positively associated with that construct. The interview accounts identified word-final consonants, stress, and intonation as specific areas of concern. These features can influence how listeners recognize words and interpret the speaker's intended meaning.

The findings support the relevance of pronunciation instruction that addresses both segmental and suprasegmental features. Focused practice may include word-final consonants, consonant clusters, voicing contrasts, lexical stress, and sentence intonation. Pronunciation work can also be integrated into communicative tasks so that learners practice producing target features while conveying meaning, rather than treating pronunciation as an isolated activity.

Digital pronunciation resources may supplement classroom practice, provided that learners receive guidance on interpreting automated feedback and evaluating their own speech. Nevertheless, the present study did not measure pronunciation accuracy directly or evaluate any digital tool. Such recommendations should therefore be understood as instructional possibilities derived from the reported difficulties, not as tested interventions.

4.6. Speaking anxiety and the interaction of linguistic and affective challenges

The interview data indicate that some students experienced speaking anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, or reduced confidence during classroom interaction. Participants' accounts suggest that these experiences may coincide with difficulties retrieving vocabulary, monitoring grammar, and maintaining fluent speech.

These findings broaden the interpretation of the survey results by showing that learners' speaking experiences are not limited to linguistic knowledge alone. Although the study focuses on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, students' descriptions suggest that the conditions in which they use their linguistic resources may also matter. Anxiety and fear of making mistakes may make spontaneous communication more demanding for some learners.

However, anxiety was not measured as an independent quantitative variable. The study therefore cannot estimate its prevalence, test its relationship with speaking skills statistically, or establish that it causes linguistic difficulties. The appropriate conclusion is that anxiety emerged as a theme in the interviews and warrants further investigation.

From a pedagogical perspective, instructors may consider providing short preparation periods, pair or small-group tasks, gradually increasing task difficulty, and constructive feedback that does not interrupt every speaking attempt. These practices may create more supportive opportunities for oral participation, but their effects would need to be evaluated in future research.

4.7. Discussion of the integrated findings

Table 1. Discussion of Linguistic Factors and Self-Perceived English-Speaking Skills

Linguistic factor	Descriptive results (N = 102)	Correlation with overall speaking skills	Key interview findings (n = 5)	Integrated interpretation
Vocabulary competence	M = 3.54, SD = 0.64	r = .502, p < .001; strongest observed correlation	Students reported difficulty retrieving appropriate words quickly during spontaneous speaking.	Adequate vocabulary knowledge may not guarantee fluent communication when lexical retrieval is slow. Instruction should combine vocabulary expansion with contextualized retrieval practice.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

Grammatical competence	M = 3.62, SD = 0.64; highest mean among the three linguistic factors	r = .492, p < .001	Students described pausing to select grammatical forms, particularly when discussing past events.	Students' perceived grammatical knowledge may not always translate into automatic grammatical use during spontaneous speech. Communicative practice can help learners apply grammar in real time.
Pronunciation competence	M = 3.51, SD = 0.69; lowest mean among the three linguistic factors	r = .397, p < .001	Reported difficulties included final consonant omission, word stress, and intonation.	Pronunciation remains an area for instructional attention because difficulties with sound production and prosody may affect intelligibility and communication.
Vocabulary competence	M = 3.54, SD = 0.64	r = .502, p < .001; strongest observed correlation	Students reported difficulty retrieving appropriate words quickly during spontaneous speaking.	Adequate vocabulary knowledge may not guarantee fluent communication when lexical retrieval is slow. Instruction should combine vocabulary expansion with contextualized retrieval practice.

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation; r = Pearson correlation coefficient. All correlations were statistically significant at p < .001. The quantitative measures reflect students' self-reported perceptions rather than objectively assessed speaking proficiency.

The integrated findings reveal that vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation were all positively associated with students' self-perceived English-speaking skills, although the strength of the observed relationships differed. Vocabulary showed the strongest correlation (r = .502), followed closely by grammar (r = .492), while pronunciation showed a comparatively weaker correlation (r = .397). These results suggest that students who rated their linguistic competence more positively also tended to evaluate their speaking skills more favorably.

The interviews provide further insight into these patterns. Students' difficulty retrieving words and selecting grammatical forms during spontaneous speech illustrates the distinction between possessing linguistic knowledge and accessing it efficiently in real-time communication. Meanwhile, reported problems with final consonants, stress, and intonation highlight specific areas requiring attention in pronunciation instruction. Taken together, the findings support an integrated approach to speaking instruction that combines lexical retrieval, communicative grammar practice, and pronunciation training.

Importantly, the correlation coefficients should not be interpreted as evidence of causal effects or as proof that vocabulary is significantly more influential than grammar or pronunciation. The findings concern self-perceived competence within this particular sample. Nevertheless, the combination of questionnaire results and interview accounts provides a useful basis for identifying instructional priorities for second-year English-major students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

5. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationships between vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and self-perceived English speaking skills among 102 second-year English-major students at Nguyen Tat Thanh University. Five semi-structured interviews provided additional insight into students' reported speaking difficulties.

The quantitative findings showed statistically significant positive correlations between overall self-perceived speaking skills and vocabulary competence ($r = .502$, $p < .001$), grammatical competence ($r = .492$, $p < .001$), and pronunciation competence ($r = .397$, $p < .001$). Vocabulary showed the strongest observed correlation, followed closely by grammar, while pronunciation also demonstrated a significant positive relationship.

The interview findings highlighted difficulties with retrieving vocabulary, applying grammatical forms during spontaneous speech, producing final consonants, and using stress and intonation. Participants also described situations in which anxiety and low confidence interfered with fluency. Together, these findings indicate that students' perceptions of speaking ability are associated with multiple linguistic resources and are shaped by their experiences of using those resources in real-time communication.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

5.2. Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest that speaking instruction should integrate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation within meaningful communicative activities rather than treating them as isolated components.

First, vocabulary instruction could emphasize lexical retrieval and contextualized use. Activities such as timed descriptions, information-gap tasks, and topic-based discussions may provide opportunities for learners to retrieve and use vocabulary during interaction.

Second, grammar instruction could connect explicit explanation with communicative practice. Short speaking tasks involving past experiences, descriptions, and explanations may help learners apply grammatical forms while maintaining the flow of communication.

Third, pronunciation instruction should address recurring difficulties with final consonants, word stress, and intonation. Listening discrimination, guided repetition, recording-and-review activities, and short communicative tasks may help learners develop greater awareness of intelligibility.

Finally, teachers could provide a supportive speaking environment in which learners have preparation time, participate in pair or small-group activities, and receive constructive feedback. Communication strategies such as paraphrasing and using appropriate fillers may also help students maintain interaction when they cannot immediately retrieve a word.

These suggestions are grounded in the reported findings, but their effectiveness requires further evaluation through classroom-based research.

REFERENCES

1. Abbas, P. G., & Narjes, B. S. (2016). How can EFL teachers help EFL learners improve their English pronunciation? *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(5), 967–972. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0705.18
2. Agustin, A. C., Laksmi, E. D., & Suharyadi, S. (2021). Speaking performance and grammatical competence across cognitive learning styles and strategy inventory for language learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan: Teori, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan*, 6(5), 692–702. https://doi.org/10.17977/jptpp.v6i5.14758
3. Ahmed, Z. A. D. A. (2017). Difficulties encountered by EFL students in learning pronunciation: A case study of Sudanese higher secondary schools. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(4), 75–82. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v7n4p75
4. Al-Lawati, M. (1995). *A diagnostic study of the difficulties Omani secondary school students encountered in their oral English production* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Sultan Qaboos University.
5. Aulia, V. (2018). Identifying the problem of Banjarese speaking students in learning English pronunciation. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 3(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v3i1.3117
6. Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.
7. Bachman, L. F., & Damböck, B. (2018). *Language assessment for classroom teachers*. Oxford University Press.
8. Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford University Press.
9. Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). *Language assessment in practice: Developing language assessments and justifying their use in the real world*. Oxford University Press.
10. Bautista, R. A., & Del Valle, J. M. (2023). Communicative competence and oral language usage of Filipino learners in English. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 4(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.53378/352957
11. Biyaem, S. (1997). Learner training: Changing roles for a changing world. In *Proceedings of the 3rd UNESCO-ACEID International Conference*. Innovation for Sustainable Development.
12. Bozoğlan, H., & Yılmaz, D. (2016). English Language Teaching. In *English Language Teaching* (pp. 75–88). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2519-8_7
13. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
14. Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.
15. Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Longman.
16. Brown, J. D., & Rodgers, T. (2002). *Doing second language research*. Oxford University Press.

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

17. Burns, A. (2012). A holistic approach to teaching speaking in the language classroom. In M. Olofsson (Ed.), *Symposium 2012* (pp. 165–178). Liber.
18. Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2–14). Longman.
19. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1
20. Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5–35. https://doi.org/10.5070/L462005216
21. Chaney, C. (1998). Preschool language and metalinguistic skills are links to reading success. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 19(3), 433–446. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716400010250
22. Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. The MIT Press.
23. Clenton, J., de Jong, N. H., Clingwall, D., & Fraser, S. (2021). Investigating the extent to which vocabulary knowledge and skills can predict aspects of fluency for a small group of pre-intermediate Japanese L1 users of English (L2). In J. Clenton & P. Booth (Eds.), *Vocabulary and the four skills: Pedagogy, practice, and implications for teaching vocabulary* (pp. 126–145). Routledge.
24. Cook, V. (1996). *Second language learning and language teaching*. Arnold.
25. Coombe, C., & Hubley, N. (2011). *Fundamentals of language assessment*. Vdocuments. https://vdocuments.mx/fundamentals-of-language-assessment.html
26. Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing. https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4
27. Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
28. Dale, E. (1969). *Audiovisual methods in teaching* (3rd ed.). Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
29. Dalton, C., & Seidlhofer, B. (1994). *Pronunciation*. Oxford University Press.
30. Dang, N. G. (2023, October). English-majored students' use of online dictionary in translation study: A survey at a Vietnamese university. In *VietTESOL International Convention Proceedings* (Vol. 3).
31. Dauber, D., & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2023). Global communication skills: Contextual factors fostering their development at internationalised higher education institutions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(7), 1082–1096. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2182874
32. de Jong, N. H. (2023). Assessing second language speaking proficiency. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 9, 541–560. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-030521-052114
33. Doff, A. (1988). *Teach English: A training course for teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
34. Ellis, R. (2009). The differential effects of three types of task planning on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy in L2 oral production. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(4), 474–509. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp042
35. Elmahdi, O. E. H., Abdalgane, M., Othman, K., & Alhaj, M. K. M. (2025). Improving communicative competence and speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms: Strategies, techniques, and pedagogical approaches. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 7(12), 484–497. https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i12.12116
36. Florez, M. A. C. (1999). *Improving adult English language learners' speaking skills*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.
37. Fulcher, G. (2003). *Testing second language speaking*. Pearson ESL.
38. Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment*. Routledge.
39. Ghafar, Z. N., & Amin, M. Y. M. (2022). Difficulties in speaking English among the EFL students in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(6), 286. https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n6p286
40. Ginther, A. (2012). Assessment of speaking. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0052
41. Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.

42. Guerrero Flores, A. C. (2025). *Linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties that undergraduate students present in order to develop their English-speaking skills* [Bachelor's thesis, Technical University of Cotopaxi]. Repositorio Institucional UTC. https://repositorio.utc.edu.ec/items/a2a87ee3-ea4e-4ccb-ba40-2907bc51a97a
43. Halik, A. F. A., & Jayasundara, N. S. (2021). Lack of vocabulary: A barrier to the oral communication skills of GCE A/L students in the Trincomalee district of Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5(7), 123–128.
44. Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching* (4th ed.). Pearson Longman.
45. Hatipoğlu, Ç., & Can Daşkın, N. (2020). A proverb in need is a proverb indeed: Proverbs, textbooks and communicative language ability. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(1), Article 1664, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n1a1664
46. Hoang, Q. (2025). Difficulties in pronunciation encountered by English major freshmen at Saigon University. *English Education and Applied Linguistics Journal*, 8(1), 10–22.
47. Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
48. Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.
49. IELTS. (2022). *Speaking: Band descriptors*. British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge Assessment English. https://www.ielts.org/-/media/pdfs/speaking-band-descriptors.ashx
50. Islam, W., Ahmad, S., & Islam, M. D. (2022). Investigating the problems faced by the university EFL learners in speaking English language. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(2), 47–65. https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22223
51. Kelly, G. (2000). *How to teach pronunciation*. Pearson Education.
52. Khamprated, N. (2012). *The problems with the English listening and speaking of students studying at a private vocational school* [Master's project, Srinakharinwirot University].
53. Kormos, J. (2006). *Speech production and second language acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
54. Le, T. S. (2022). Investigating pronunciation difficulties and preference for pronunciation instruction. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 6(2), 114–125. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejfl.v6i2.4353
55. Le, T. S., & Nguyen, T. T. (2024). Discovering English pronunciation difficulties and strategies: A case at Tra Vinh University. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 8(2), 74–85. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejfl.v8i2.5401
56. Levelt, W. J. M. (1989). *Speaking: From intention to articulation*. MIT Press.
57. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
58. Littlemore, J., & Low, G. (2006). Metaphoric competence, second language learning and communicative language ability. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(2), 268–294. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/aml004
59. Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511733017
60. Mahdi, D. A. (2024). Linguistic and non-linguistic barriers to English speaking ability among Saudi EFL learners. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 8(2), 191–211. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202426853
61. Mart, Ç. T. (2012). Developing speaking skills through reading. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(6), 91–96. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n6p91
62. Moore, E. (2020). Competence, communicative and linguistic. In J. Stanlaw (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of linguistic anthropology* (pp. 1–4). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0070
63. Morley, J. (1998). Tripping on the tongue: Putting serious speech/pronunciation instruction back in the TESOL equation. *ESL Magazine*, 1(3), 20–23.
64. Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
65. Ngoc, D. T. B., & Dung, T. T. (2020). Key factors influencing learners' oral fluency in English speaking classes: A case at a public university in Viet Nam. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 36(6), 93–108. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4654
66. Nguyen Vu, K., Bach Le, T., & Anh Chien, D. (2021). Use of resources and activities for language learning beyond the classroom by English-majored students at a university in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(6), 33–47. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4781
67. Noreillie, A. S., Desmet, P., & Peters, E. (2020). Factors predicting low-intermediate French learners' vocabulary use in speaking tasks. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 76(3), 194–217. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr-2019-0018

International Journal of Current Science Research and Review
ISSN: 2581-8341
Volume 09 Issue 11 November 2026
DOI: 10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06, Impact Factor: 8.048
IJCSRR @ 2026
www.ijcsrr.org

68. Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. Prentice-Hall International.
69. Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & learning*. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
70. Otlowski, M. (1998). Pronunciation: What are the expectations? *The Internet TESL Journal*, 4(1), 115–129.
71. Quianthy, R. L. (1990). *Communication is life: Essential college sophomore speaking and listening competencies*. National Communication Association.
72. Richards, J. C. (2008). Competence and performance in language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 35(2), 85–97. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444802211829
73. Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge University Press.
74. Sabarniati, & Zulkarnain, S. I. (2020). The impacts of grammatical competence towards students' speaking proficiency in learning English as a foreign language. *Getsempena English Education Journal*, 7(1), 102–112. https://doi.org/10.46244/geej.v7i1.1091
75. Sahatsathatsana, S. (2017). Pronunciation problems of Thai students learning English phonetics: A case study at Kalasin University. *Journal of Education, Mahasarakham University*, 11(4), 115–126.
76. Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
77. Schwartz, A. M. (2005). Exploring differences and similarities in the writing strategies used by students in SNS courses. In L. A. O. López & M. Lacorte (Eds.), *Contactos y contextos: El español en los Estados Unidos y en contacto con otras lenguas* (pp. 323–334). Iberoamericana/Vervuert.
78. Shumin, K. (2002). Factors to consider: Developing adult EFL students speaking abilities. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 204–211). Cambridge University Press.
79. Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford University Press.
80. Skehan, P. (2009). Modelling second language performance: Integrating complexity, accuracy, fluency, and lexis. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(4), 510–532. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp047
81. Soraya, R. (2012). *The contribution of grammar mastery toward speaking ability of second year student at MAN 2 Model Pekanbaru* [Unpublished undergraduate thesis]. State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.
82. Taqwa, K., Hidayat, D. N., Anasy, Z., Syafii, M., & Adrefiza. (2022). An analysis of students' speaking anxiety in EFL classroom: A mixed-method study. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(5), 6520–6530. https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i5.2999
83. Thorndike, E. L., & Barnhart, C. L. (1979). *Scott, Foresman advanced dictionary*. Scott, Foresman.
84. Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to teach speaking*. Longman.
85. Thornbury, S., & Slade, D. (2006). *Conversation: From description to pedagogy*. Cambridge University Press.
86. Tran, D. T., & Mai, N. T. N. (2023). Oral communication skills among English-majored graduates: A survey of those at companies in Binh Duong province, Vietnam. *Journal of Science and Technology - NTTU*, 1(2), 45–54.
87. Uchihara, T. (2021). Vocabulary and speaking: Current research, tools, and practices. In J. Clenton & P. Booth (Eds.), *Vocabulary and the four skills: Pedagogy, practice, and implications for teaching vocabulary* (pp. 121–125). Routledge.
88. Uchihara, T., & Clenton, J. (2023). The role of spoken vocabulary knowledge in second language speaking proficiency. *The Language Learning Journal*, 51(3), 376–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2080856
89. Vu, T. H. (2023). An investigation into difficulties in teaching pronunciation to first-year English majors at Dong Nai University. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 5(2), 135–150. https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2023.5.2.17
90. Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge University Press.

Cite this Article: Hoang Le, L.K., Nguyen, L.T. (2026). Linguistic Factors Affecting English Speaking Skills among Second-Year English-Major Students: A Mixed-Methods Study. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 9(11), pp. 5568-5579. DOI: https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V9-i11-06