

A Study of Improving English Speaking Skills for The IELTS Test of Students at Foreign Trade University of Hanoi in Vietnam

Phan Thi Tho

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

Corresponding Author E-mail: thophan.rabbit@gmail.com

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Abstract

University in Hanoi, Vietnam; and 3) To propose strategies and techniques to improve speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam. This research is a mixed research design between quantitative and qualitative. A questionnaire was used to collect qualitative data from 120 Vietnamese students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam. Furthermore, an in-depth interview was conducted with five key informants teaching IETST at some universities in Hanoi, Vietnam, and English centers. According to the results of research, there are five problems related to Speaking techniques of the IELTS Speaking Test, which include: 1) insufficient practice time, 2) poor pronunciation, 3) grammatical errors, 4) inability to speak fluently, and 5) unnatural style and incorrect pronunciation.

Keywords: Speaking Skills; IELTS; Vietnamese Student

Introduction

When learning any language, the ultimate goal is to communicate naturally and fluently with native speakers. So, speaking is a challenging skill in both practice and exams (Li, 2009). Maybe many candidates write English quite well because they have a good grasp of grammar and vocabulary, but they have problems with language reflexes. Lack of practice, fear of mistakes, fear of communication, etc., can all be the cause of the reality of most Vietnamese in general and university students in particular, who do not speak English well (Jones, 2004). Perhaps the main reason is still the unstandardized learning method. Students are continuously familiarized with English from a very early age, perhaps from elementary school, but they only work hard at learning grammar, writing, and spelling each new word. Practice reading through passages in textbooks rather than making sentences and practicing speaking together. In reading passages, intonation does not seem to be given much attention, and most students are always trying to find out the meaning of the passage, writing the meaning aside to learn new words. That habit is maintained until high school and the university entrance exam. Partly because of much homework, and partly because of dealing with the immediate exam, so even though they know it is not good, few people are interested in

practicing speaking English. Going to university, interacting with many people, starting a part-time job and orienting a career, and needing IELTS help students to realize that if they cannot communicate, the remaining English skills have accumulated for a long time will not become gradually redundant.

The researcher recognizes the characteristics and difficulty of the IELTS Speaking test as a learner of the English language who has used it to prepare for the IELTS test. Foreign Trade University is a school that requires students with IELTS scores. This is because the researcher chose 120 second-year students from Foreign Trade University's Business Administration Department as research subjects. This research will point out the weaknesses and ineffective speaking habits and give methods to help students make the fastest progress and eliminate the burden of being afraid to speak. The rest is practicing speaking naturally like a native speaker according to the four criteria set out in IELTS speaking: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammar Range and Accuracy, and Pronunciation (Park, 2009) to help second - year students at Foreign Trade University achieve higher results in the IELTS speaking test.

Objectives

1. To study speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam.
2. To find out the difficulties in speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam.
3. To propose the strategies and techniques to improve speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher employs mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and finding out the results to solve the problems. The research process took place from January 2022 to January 2023, by sending 120 survey questionnaires to second-year students of foreign trade universities, collecting data using Google Form, and also interviewing consult experts, IELTS teachers at a number of universities as well as prestigious IELTS training and preparation centers online on the Zoom application. The cause of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, having difficulty with IELTS speaking. The findings indicate that a vital problem of the respondents is having difficulty in IELTS speaking because most of the respondents learn English in a passive environment, so they lack self-confidence while communicating, especially when speaking on the IELTS test. Also, the result shows that some problems that students face when studying and taking the IELTS Speaking test are insufficient practice time, poor vocabulary, grammatical errors, inability to speak fluently, unnatural style, and incorrect pronunciation. The strategy to solve complex

problems in IELTS Speaking for students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam. Research results show that there are many meaningful ways to solve the problems for students in Speaking IELTS. Students should first motivate themselves to speak English in many ways, such as: through online chat, joining the English club to communicate face-to-face, watching English movies, listening to English music, speaking English by themselves in front of the mirror, recording their voice, and practicing with friends every day. In addition, reading more books and newspapers is also an excellent method to increase vocabulary which directly supports learners' speaking ability. Besides, shadowing is also an advantageous method to overcome these difficulties. Moreover, setting high goals helps students have a clear purpose to set a practical roadmap to strive. Then motivate themselves and persist in not giving up on the difficulties or challenges in Speaking IELTS and try to overcome them by improving their knowledge, self-study, and creating a habit of practicing Speaking every day.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is 120 Vietnamese students in Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam and out of the total population of 120, second-year students are selected as the sample of the study that is selected by the purposive sampling method. Five key informants are teaching IETST at some universities in Hanoi, Vietnam, and English centers selected as in-depth interviews for qualitative research.

Research Tools

For collecting quantitative data, a questionnaire was constructed via Google Form. The questions in the questionnaire contain three main statements as follows:

Part I: General information of respondents;

Part II: The difficulties encountered in improving English speaking skill;

Part III: The strategies and techniques to improve speaking skills for the IELTS test of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam.

For collecting qualitative data, the question consists of the following two sections:

Section A: General information and the way to use the skills for IELTS speaking to teach.

Section B: The difficulties of Vietnamese students in speaking and strategies for students to talk about each part of the speaking test in IELTS.

Data Collection

The researcher administered a questionnaire to 120 students who used to take part in the IELTS test and are studying at Foreign Trade University in Ha Noi, Vietnam. After the 120 questionnaires were filled in completely, the researcher collected them.

The researcher conducted an in-depth interview with five key informants by recording and observing them. After the interview, the researcher has processed all the information in the recording and observed.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data of the research study is to analyze the data from the respondents. Was collected, analyzed by the mean and percentage, and then interpreted. Meanwhile, the data from the in-depth interviews was analyzed and separated as follows:

The Analysis of Quantitative Data: The questionnaire has been processed by the mean and percentage and then was interpreted. Statistics including percentage, mean, has been used for analyzing data.

The Analysis of Qualitative Data: The content for analyzing qualitative data was collected from five key informants. All data obtained from the interviewees were noted from the voices recorder and analyzed.

Results

Objective 1. The result shows the Foreign Trade University of Vietnam has accepted students who meet the English standards by requiring IELTS, besides many subjects also taught in English. However, most students here have many difficulties with speaking skills because of the lack of communication environment, practice, and many other reasons that directly affect the IELTS test results. Therefore, to help students find and solve complex problems in speaking.

Table 1 The number of times students take part in the IELTS test

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Never attended	0	0%
1-2 times	65	54,2%
3-4 times	51	42,5%
5 times, or more	4	3,3%
Total	120	100%

As shown in Table 1, the result of the number of times students take part in the IELTS test. Most of the respondents have taken part in the IELTS test 1–2 times, with a total of 65 people, or 54.2%, followed by 51 people, or 42.5%, of the respondents who took part in the IELTS test for 3–4 years, and then 5 times or more, with a total of 4 people, or 3.3%. The last one was 0 people, or 0% of the respondents, who never took part in the IELTS test.

Table 2 The score of the students on Speaking skills on the IELTS test

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Under 5.0	1	0,8%
5.5	50	41,7%
6.0	52	43,3%
6.5 or higher	17	14,2%
Total	120	100%

As shown in Table 2, the score of the students on speaking skills on the IELTS test. Most of the respondents have a score of 6.0 on the IELTS Speaking test, with 52 people, or 43.3%, followed by 50 people, or 41.7%, of the respondents who have a score of 5.5 on the IELTS Speaking test, and the next band 6.5 or higher, with 17 people, or 14.2%. The last one was 1 person, or 0.8% of the respondents, who had a score on the IELTS Speaking test for the band under 5.0.

Research objective 2. The result shows that the most demanding criteria for getting a high score for speaking on the IELTS test. It refers to the students who have taken the IELTS test and are currently studying at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam. The results show that students were required to meet grammatical range and accuracy criteria. And the most common mistakes students make when taking the Speaking Part 2 exam. It refers to the students who have taken part in the IELTS test. The results show that candidates are often out of ideas, stop halfway, and often speak without fluency and do not use filler.

Research objective 3. The results show that the strategies to improve speaking skills for the IELTS test. Staying calm is an essential strategy. The more anxious and uncomfortable a candidate is in the test room, the more difficult it will be to speak fluently and maintain coherence between ideas in the IELTS Speaking test. Candidates will feel overwhelmed when they have to correctly use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures to express what they want to say. To overcome this situation, students must learn to control their minds. Candidates should think that the examiners are the people who are helping and supporting them. If candidates are familiar with the IELTS Speaking test structure and question types, candidates should start planning. Consider what candidates might say in various situations as it arises in the test. It is the final period to demonstrate the candidate's ability to use the present perfect. Those are the strategies for getting a high score in IELTS Speaking. For the techniques to improve speaking skills for the IELTS test, candidates must use relative clauses, use a variety of tenses, Lexical Resources, Paraphrase Ability, Using idioms, Pronunciation, and Comprehensibility.

Result responding to research objective 1: Through research on technical issues related to improving Speaking skills for IELTS at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, Research shows four problems related to techniques to enhance Speaking skills for the IELTS test at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, including 1) Students pronounce incorrectly; 2) The student lacks fluency, coherence, and spontaneity; 3) Students have not equipped themselves with a rich Lexical Resource; 4) Students need to be able to use diverse and accurate sentence structures. It directly affects the Grammar Range and Accuracy criteria.

Result responding to research objective 2: The research on Speaking skills for the IELTS test at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, has found it difficult for students to answer some types of questions and topics in the IELTS Speaking tests. Part 1: Candidates need more confidence when answering questions. Besides, there is a lack of interaction with the examiner,

such as making eye contact and smiling. In Part 2 of the IELTS Speaking test, candidates had only 1 minute to prepare before describing an object within a maximum of 2 minutes. Therefore, candidates are pressured for time and often stuck for ideas when they have to present a topic within two minutes. In Part 3, the examiner asked questions about the topic based on the content of the previous test, IELTS Speaking of Part 2. In this part of the test, the examiner scored students based on how they expressed their opinions and thoughts clearly and coherently. However, candidates often need more background knowledge to explain in depth, not use complex sentences, and cannot maintain coherence when speaking.

Result responding to research objective 3: Concerning the proposed solutions to improve the speaking techniques for the IELTS exam at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, there are five solutions to improve the speaking techniques for the IELTS test students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, which are as follows:

1) Students should use some skills such as: trying to speak English; working out at home, increasing the number of practice hours; Boldly asking the examiner; Trying to expand the answer; Mastering functional languages; Using a natural speaking style; Care about grammar and fluency; Take time to think; Correct own mistakes).

2) Students should set high goals for the exam and practice speaking skills like shadowing, interpreting ideas, confidence, seeking more communication opportunities, trusting a clear voice, making eye contact, and smiling more.

3) Candidates should not memorize sample answers in Speaking IELTS of Part 1. Because it can result in unnatural, forced answers; examiners who have had enough training and experience to recognize if a candidate is attempting to memorize the sample; In many cases, the examiner will follow up on what the candidate has said by asking additional questions. IELTS Speaking is graded based on four criteria rather than the number of answers. As a result, candidates should only refer to the Speaking sample for expressions and vocabulary. Aside from that, Speaking Part 1 ends at the basic question-and-answer level. Each IELTS Speaking Part 1 question response should be no more than 2-3 sentences long. Candidates should be able to use the main topics in Speaking IELTS to build answer formulas for each type that are appropriate for the target band score.

4) To create a long speech in IELTS Speaking of Part 2, each candidate must have the vocabulary and skills to implement ideas quickly and under exam room pressure. Even at the highest level, it is a complex request. As a result, even though sample essay sources are available by topic, candidates must still learn how to implement ideas, expand vocabulary, and manage time in IELTS Speaking of Part 2.

5) Speaking Part 3 is always a difficult task for IELTS students. Candidates must be knowledgeable and brave enough to face the exam questions and examiners. When faced with difficult questions in IELTS Speaking of Part 3, candidates should employ some beneficial

ways to handle difficult situations in IELTS Speaking of Part 3, such as: (Ask again when the candidate does not know the question; Commenting on the question; Give a general answer).

New Body of Knowledge

The main objective of this study is to find out the difficulties Vietnamese students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, face in the IELTS Speaking test. In addition, this study also aims to provide strategies to overcome student problems and help students achieve higher scores in the Speaking section of the IELTS test. The sample of this study was 120 students. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire. After collecting the answers about students' difficulties using a questionnaire, all the data of those problems are calculated to show the difficulty level when studying and taking the IELTS Speaking test that the students face. These data were analyzed for percentages, and frequencies. For a study on IELTS Speaking techniques for students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam, there are five problems related to Speaking techniques of the IELTS Speaking Test, includes 1) insufficient practice time, 2) poor pronunciation, 3) grammatical errors, 4) inability to speak fluently and 5) unnatural style and incorrect pronunciation.

The research process is split into the following conceptual framework:

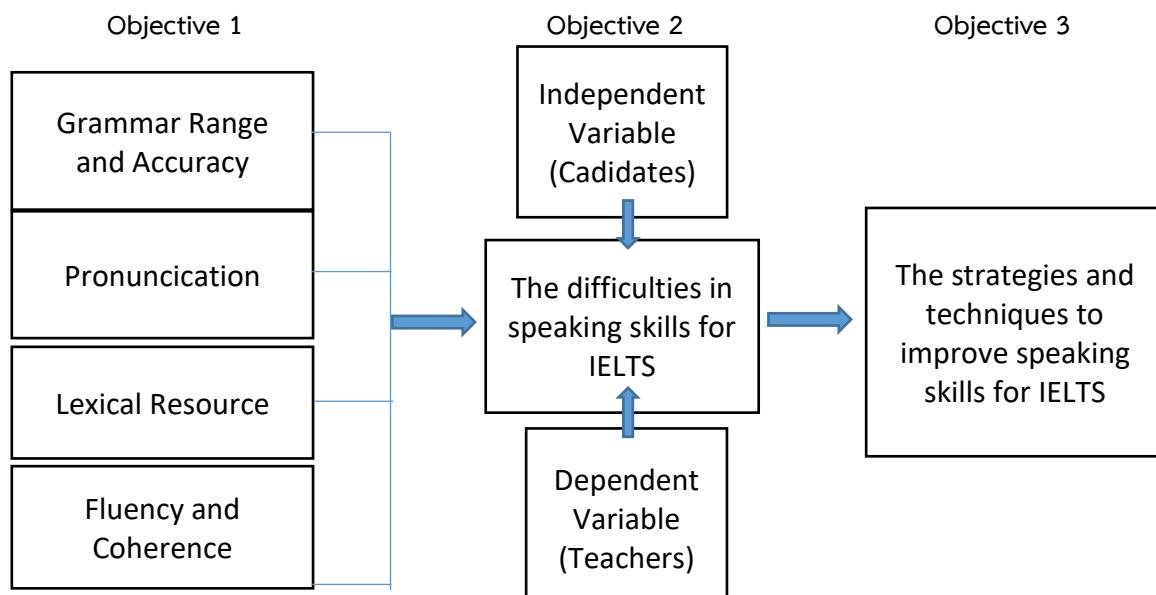
Reading and gathering all relevant papers, such as books, PDF books, and theses, to study speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam (Objective 1).

Conducting a questionnaire survey of more than two hundred IELTS test participants and five teachers who teach IELTS test techniques (Objective 2).

Analyzing survey results and systematizing acquired data in a well-noted format offers the best options to improve speaking skills (Objective 3).

Conclusion and suggestions for further research.

Conceptual Framework



Suggestions

From the research results, the researcher has the following suggestions:

1. Suggestions for an Application

For the current problems of students learning IELTS Speaking, it is necessary to study the nature of speaking or communicating between the mother tongue and English. Compare the similarities and differences between the four skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing to find the optimal score to help students learn four English skills simultaneously.

2. Suggestions for further research

It is advisable to research techniques to improve IELTS learners' listening skills in the same field. It can be precious to students because listening is a skill that can be learned and practiced alongside speaking. They can complement each other, helping learners to progress faster. It is another topic to study.

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