

## A Study on the Impact of Learning Autonomy on Speaking 1 Exam Results and Proposals for Enhancing Speaking Skills of Second-Year Students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City

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### ABSTRACT

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### KEYWORDS

Impact, Learning autonomy, Speaking skills, Enhancing

This study explores the influence of learning autonomy on the Speaking 1 exam outcomes of second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). Given the pivotal role of speaking proficiency in both academic and professional spheres, coupled with the indispensable nature of autonomous learning in mastering a foreign language, this research seeks to elucidate the relationship between students' autonomy in learning and their performance in Speaking 1 assessments. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data derived from exam scores and surveys that assess levels of learning autonomy, alongside qualitative insights gathered from student interviews and educator observations. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between elevated levels of learning autonomy and enhanced speaking exam results. Moreover, the research delineates key factors contributing to learning autonomy, such as intrinsic motivation, access to diverse learning resources, and the implementation of self-regulatory practices. Drawing from these insights, the study proposes several pedagogical strategies aimed at augmenting students' speaking abilities. These include the integration of autonomous learning activities within the curriculum, the organization of workshops centered on self-directed learning methodologies, and the utilization of technological tools to provide supplementary practice opportunities. The proposed interventions are designed to cultivate a learning environment that nurtures autonomy, thereby fostering improved speaking proficiency and overall academic performance. This research offers valuable contributions to the understanding of learning autonomy's role in language acquisition and presents actionable strategies for enhancing speaking skills. The findings hold significant implications for both students and educators at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, IUH, paving the way for more effective language education practices.

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## 1. Introduction

In the rapidly globalizing world of today, English proficiency has evolved into a crucial skill, particularly for students in countries where English is not the native language. Among the myriad language abilities, speaking stands out as a cornerstone, essential for effective communication and meaningful engagement in real-world interactions. This research sets out to explore the impact of learning autonomy on speaking proficiency, focusing specifically on second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH).

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of speaking skills, a significant number of students at IUH struggle to attain the proficiency levels they aspire to. Early observations suggest that a key factor hindering their progress may be a lack of

learning autonomy. This highlights an urgent need to delve deeper into the relationship between autonomous learning and performance in speaking exams. Moreover, there is a noticeable gap in the development of tailored, practical strategies that can effectively bolster the speaking abilities of these students.

This research aims to bridge that gap by providing a nuanced understanding of how learning autonomy influences language proficiency. The findings are expected to have a trans-formative impact on teaching methodologies, encouraging educators to cultivate environments that nurture independent learning. Furthermore, the strategies proposed in this study will offer practical, actionable solutions for enhancing speaking skills, with the potential to significantly boost the academic and professional trajectories of students.

By investigating the dynamic interplay between learning autonomy and speaking proficiency, this study addresses a vital dimension of language education. Focusing on the specific context of second-year students at IUH, the research aspires to generate valuable insights and practical interventions that can improve speaking exam outcomes and overall speaking competence. The anticipated results of this study will not only enrich the educational experiences of these students but also equip them with the tools needed to navigate the challenges of an increasingly interconnected global environment.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definitions and key terms**

#### **2.1.1 What is autonomy in learning?**

Learner autonomy is a multifaceted concept that has evolved significantly over time. According to Holec (1981), autonomy in learning is defined as “the capacity for learners to take ownership of their studying” (p.3). This definition underscores the importance of students assuming full responsibility for every stage of their learning journey. Holec’s perspective is further expanded by Benson (2011), who describes autonomy as “being able to take command of one’s own learning” (p.58). Benson’s interpretation introduces the notion of “control,” which aligns more closely with contemporary research than Holec’s earlier emphasis on “charge” and “responsibility.”

In practical terms, fostering learner autonomy often involves a strategic approach to training, designed to empower students with the skills necessary to manage their own learning processes effectively (Smith, 2008). This approach marks a shift from viewing education merely as a communal endeavor towards recognizing it as a dynamic interplay where power and responsibilities are redefined.

Holec (1981) posits that genuine self-directed learning demands a high degree of personal accountability and self-awareness from students. In agreement, Benson (2011) emphasizes that autonomy encompasses the ability of individuals to actively direct and take full responsibility for their own educational journey, integrating information and skills beyond the standard curriculum. The essence of self-directed learning is not merely about dedicating extra time to study but also about cultivating the self-discipline required for ongoing exploration and practice outside regular class hours.

Self-study, therefore, involves the proactive pursuit and assimilation of knowledge and skills without the immediate guidance of teachers or external instruction. It represents a commitment to personal growth and learning that transcends traditional classroom boundaries.

#### **2.1.2 What are English speaking skills?**

In the realm of language acquisition, speaking stands out as one of the four foundational skills—alongside reading, writing, and listening. According to Farabi, Hassanvand, and Gorjian (2017), speaking serves as a crucial channel through which students

engage with others to achieve specific goals or convey their thoughts, intentions, aspirations, and viewpoints (p. 17). This interactive process allows individuals to express and exchange ideas effectively.

Boudjatat and Zaik (2019) further elucidate that speaking is not merely a standalone skill but one intricately linked with listening. They describe it as a dynamic, reciprocal process of giving and receiving information akin to a conversation between participants (p. 6). Similarly, Arung (2016) defines speaking as an act of exchanging information through dialogue, emphasizing the interactive nature of this skill (p. 71). These perspectives collectively highlight that speaking involves both the delivery and reception of information within conversational exchanges.

Farabi, Hassanvand, and Gorjian's view underscores speaking as a means of personal and interpersonal communication, where one articulates and shares ideas, opinions, and goals. Meanwhile, Boudjatat and Zaik (2019) illustrate that speaking is fundamentally about facilitating mutual understanding through active listening and responsive interaction. Arung (2016) reinforces this by focusing on the communicative exchange between individuals.

To speak English fluently, one must master a constellation of skills. This includes effective listening, a rich and diverse vocabulary, a solid grasp of grammatical structures, and clear pronunciation. Mastery of these elements not only facilitates effective communication but also opens doors to numerous opportunities in social, educational, and professional contexts.

In essence, English speaking skills encompass more than just verbal expression; they represent the ability to engage in meaningful dialogue, share insights, and build connections in a globalized world.

## **2.2 Results of previous studies**

### ***2.2.1 Research on student autonomy***

#### ***2.2.1.1 Positive impact of autonomy***

Learner autonomy has become an important concept in language education, with profound benefits for students. The ability to take responsibility for one's learning journey has been linked to a variety of positive educational outcomes. Benson (2001) notes that autonomous learners tend to be more motivated, more aware of their meta-cognition, and more proficient at translating. In the same way, Little (1991) argues that learners become more engaged and responsible when they are given autonomy to direct their educational experiences.

Furthermore, autonomy promotes critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Students who are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning are more likely to critically analyze their language use and seek additional resources to clarify any doubts they may have. Their proactive attitude not only enhances their speaking skills but also builds their confidence in using the language in real-life situations. By managing their learning journeys, students can become lifelong learners, continually improving their language skills outside the classroom. It is interesting to note that autonomy may have a different impact on learning across genders. Oxford and Ehrman (1995) found that female students were more likely to use self-regulated learning strategies, such as planning and self-assessment, which contributed to their improved performance in speaking exams. This structured approach allows female students to manage their study time effectively, leading to consistent and focused speaking practice. On the other hand, Powell and Battersby (1985) noted that male students may prefer more flexible and interactive learning experiences, such as engaging in conversations or participating in language games, which may also enhance their speaking ability.

In conclusion, promoting learner autonomy has a significant and positive impact on the development of speaking skills, especially on the Speaking Test 1 results of second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. By empowering students to take control of their learning, educators can increase motivation, promote critical thinking, and ultimately improve language proficiency. Autonomy not only supports immediate academic achievement but also equips students with the skills and mindsets necessary for lifelong language learning and effective communication.

### ***2.2.1.2 Strategies for fostering student autonomy***

Encouraging learner autonomy involves a range of strategies designed to nurture independence and self-direction. Dickinson (1995) emphasizes the importance of providing learners with choices in their learning activities and incorporating goal-setting practices. These approaches empower students to take ownership of their educational processes. Benson (2007) advocates for a facilitative teaching role, where educators support students in developing self-assessment skills and reflective practices.

The integration of technology is also pivotal in promoting autonomy. Reinders and White (2016) note that digital tools and online resources offer students extensive opportunities for self-directed practice, enhancing their ability to learn independently. Ushioda (2011) further highlights the need for a supportive learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks and experiment with language use without fear of failure.

In summary, the research indicates that fostering learner autonomy through thoughtful strategies and supportive environments can significantly enhance language learning outcomes, empowering students to achieve greater success in their educational endeavors.

## ***2.2.2 Research on speaking skills***

### ***2.2.2.1 The significance of speaking skills and current challenges***

Speaking is a cornerstone of effective language acquisition, intricately tied to our ability to communicate meaningfully and interact fluidly. Bygate (1987) underscores that speaking is not merely a linguistic exercise but a complex skill requiring rapid information processing and spontaneous interaction. The pivotal role of speaking in both academic and professional realms is extensively acknowledged, with Thornbury (2005) emphasizing its critical importance. Nevertheless, many students, including those at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, encounter significant hurdles in achieving speaking proficiency. Luoma (2004) identifies common challenges, such as issues with fluency, accuracy, and the application of appropriate communicative strategies.

#### ***2.2.2.2. Challenges in enhancing speaking skills***

The journey to mastering speaking skills is fraught with obstacles. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) highlight foreign language anxiety as a major impediment, often causing learners to feel self-conscious and hesitant. Furthermore, Nunan (1999) points out that traditional classroom settings frequently fall short of providing authentic speaking practice, leaving students with limited opportunities for meaningful interaction. Hedge (2000) adds that insufficient feedback and constructive criticism can stymie progress, while Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) note that cultural factors and fear of making errors further exacerbate learners' reluctance to engage in spoken language.

#### ***2.2.2.3. Key factors influencing speaking skills***

The development of speaking skills is influenced by a constellation of factors. Linguistic elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar are foundational, but psychological factors like confidence and motivation also play a crucial role. Ellis (2008) emphasizes that individual differences in language learning—such as attitudes, beliefs, and motivational drives—significantly impact speaking performance. Dornyei (2005) highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in propelling learners to practice and refine their speaking abilities. Additionally, pedagogical practices, including innovative teaching methods and interactive classroom dynamics, are instrumental in shaping students' speaking skills, as demonstrated by Richards (2008).

### ***2.2.3. The intersection of autonomy and speaking proficiency***

An emerging body of research establishes a compelling link between learner autonomy and speaking proficiency. Cotterall (2000) asserts that autonomous learners, driven by their self-directed approach, actively seek out opportunities for language use, thereby enhancing their speaking skills. Littlewood (1996) further supports this perspective, noting that learners who exercise autonomy are more adept at identifying and addressing their speaking weaknesses. Fazey and Fazey (2001) reveal that autonomy fosters higher levels of self-regulation, enabling learners to set personal goals, monitor their progress, and adapt their strategies effectively. This proactive and self-directed learning approach is instrumental in achieving improved speaking performance and enhanced communicative competence.

### ***2.2.4. The imperative of self-study for enhancing speaking skills***

Self-study stands as a cornerstone in the edifice of speaking skill development, offering learners the autonomy to engage with language learning on their own terms. Gardner (2007) illuminates that self-study instills a profound sense of responsibility and ownership, elements that are indispensable for ongoing language growth. When learners embark on self-directed study, they unlock a treasure trove of resources, from cutting-edge language learning apps and dynamic online speaking clubs to a wealth of multimedia content. This eclectic mix provides not just practice but authentic, varied speaking opportunities that mimic real-world interactions.

Harmer (2001) underscores the value of self-study as a vehicle for continuous practice and introspection, enabling learners to incrementally refine their speaking skills. By engaging in self-study, learners not only practice speaking at their own pace but also cultivate a deeper, more personalized understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement.

In essence, the literature reveals that fostering learner autonomy and promoting self-study are not just supplementary but essential strategies for overcoming the common hurdles in speaking proficiency. By embracing self-study, students can surmount these challenges and elevate their speaking abilities, paving the way for more effective and confident communication in a foreign language.

## **3. Methodology**

### ***3.1 Research site***

The Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH), located at 12 Nguyen Van Bao Street, hosts a dynamic Faculty of Foreign Languages dedicated to language education and academic growth. It offers diverse courses, modern classrooms with advanced audio-visual technology, and promotes interactive learning. This study will explore the impact of learning autonomy on Speaking 1 exam results, leveraging faculty collaboration, university resources, and student engagement to enhance speaking proficiency among second-year students.

### ***3.2 Participants***

This study investigates the academic performance of second-year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH), specifically those enrolled in the compulsory "Speaking 1" course. The research aims to sample 140 students, subject to final enrollment and consent.

All participants voluntarily agreed to join, ensuring the authenticity of the feedback and enhancing data reliability. The cohort reflects diverse demographics, including variations in gender, age, and linguistic proficiency, which allows for a broad range of perspectives.

The study focuses on how self-study affects results in Speaking Test 1, emphasizing its significance in language learning. Findings are expected to provide insights into the relationship between self-directed learning and academic performance,

informing future pedagogical strategies and curricular design, ultimately enhancing understanding of factors influencing language acquisition in higher education.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Mixed Method**

The research project titled “A Study on the Impact of Learning Autonomy on Speaking 1 Exam Results and Proposals for Enhancing Speaking Skills of Second-Year Students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City” employs a robust blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This dual approach ensures a thorough exploration of the research topic from multiple perspectives.

**Qualitative Methodology:** The qualitative component focuses on gathering rich, descriptive data through direct engagement with the study participants. This includes interviews and surveys that capture personal experiences and insights regarding learning autonomy and its effects on speaking performance. The qualitative analysis aims to uncover underlying patterns and themes, offering a nuanced understanding of how self-study practices influence speaking skills.

**Quantitative Methodology:** Complementing the qualitative approach, the quantitative methodology involves statistical analysis of collected data. Here, SPSS software is utilized to systematically process and analyze numerical data, such as self-study time and Speaking Test 1 scores. This method prioritizes objective measurement and comparison, enabling precise evaluation of correlations between self-study behaviors and exam outcomes. By focusing on numerical values, ratios, and statistical significance, the quantitative analysis ensures rigorous, data-driven insights.

The integration of both methodologies provides a comprehensive view of the research topic. While the qualitative method offers depth and context, the quantitative approach ensures accuracy and generalizability. Together, they create a well-rounded research framework that addresses both the procedural and numerical aspects of learning autonomy and its impact on speaking proficiency. This multifaceted approach not only enriches the study’s findings but also enhances the validity and reliability of the results.

#### **3.3.2 Data collection tool**

The research method employed in this study revolves around a carefully designed questionnaire, a widely recognized tool for efficiently gathering quantitative data. As noted by Sekaran (2003), a questionnaire is a potent survey method that enables the collection of data from a large number of respondents within a relatively short period. This approach allows for a broad assessment of variables related to the research topic.

In this study, a comprehensive questionnaire comprising 19 questions is utilized to capture a wide range of data pertinent to learning autonomy and its impact on Speaking Test 1 results. The questionnaire is meticulously designed to address the following core components:

*1. Participant Information:* The initial section collects essential demographic details, including student ID, age, gender, major, and English proficiency level. This foundational data helps to contextualize the responses and ensures a thorough understanding of the participant pool.

*2. Speaking Test 1 Details:* The second section delves into specifics related to Speaking Test 1, including self-assessment of speaking skills and individual perceptions of performance. This section aims to gather nuanced insights into how students view their speaking abilities and the perceived effectiveness of their self-study efforts.

3. *Self-Study Practices*: Section three focuses on participants' subjective evaluations of their daily self-study activities. It seeks to uncover patterns in self-study routines, frequency, and methods, providing a clearer picture of how these practices correlate with speaking test outcomes.

4. *Learning Attitudes and Adherence*: The fourth section explores students' attitudes towards learning and their strategies for maintaining consistent self-study routines. Understanding these attitudes and strategies offers valuable information on the factors influencing the effectiveness of autonomous learning.

5. *Personal Assessments and Reflections*: The final section invites participants to reflect on their personal achievements and challenges in their language learning journey. This self-assessment aims to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement, offering actionable insights for enhancing speaking skills.

By analyzing the responses from this structured questionnaire using regression analysis and other statistical techniques, the study aims to draw correlations between self-study practices and Speaking Test 1 results. The ultimate goal is to provide actionable recommendations for improving speaking skills based on empirical data. This methodological approach not only ensures a comprehensive analysis of learning autonomy but also empowers students to adopt new strategies and techniques to enhance their speaking abilities.

### **3.4 Procedure**

This study investigates the relationship between self-study practices and Speaking 1 exam scores among second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). To provide a robust analysis of the underlying factors and participant perspectives, a meticulously designed questionnaire was employed. Here's a breakdown of the research procedures:

#### *Phase 1: Literature Review and Preliminary Research*

Our research team embarked on a thorough exploration of existing literature to establish a foundational understanding of the topic. We delved into a diverse array of scholarly articles, both domestic and international, focusing on self-study and related educational practices. By examining these sources, we aimed to grasp the nuances of previous findings and current debates. This comprehensive review allowed us to clarify our research objectives and refine our approach, ensuring that our study builds on a solid academic framework.

#### *Phase 2: Designing the Questionnaire*

Crafting the questionnaire involved a careful balance between clarity and depth. We focused on developing questions that are not only straightforward and accessible but also capable of eliciting detailed responses. The aim was to ensure that the questions capture the essence of self-study practices and their impact on speaking skills while maintaining participant engagement. Our design process addressed potential challenges to ensure that the survey is user-friendly, respectful, and effective in collecting relevant data.

#### *Phase 3: Administering the Survey*

To maximize accessibility and efficiency, we chose Google Forms as the platform for distributing our questionnaire. Given the limitations of paper-based surveys in reaching a broad audience, the online format offers several advantages, including ease of distribution, quicker response collection, and cost-effectiveness. We ensured that the digital survey was optimized for user experience, making it convenient for students to participate and provide valuable feedback.

*Phase 4: Data Collection and Processing*

Utilizing Google Forms, we efficiently gathered responses from participants, leveraging the platform’s real-time feedback and automatic data recording capabilities. This approach facilitated a seamless collection process, allowing us to compile and organize data systematically. The integration with SPSS and Microsoft Excel enabled us to analyze the data comprehensively, providing precise and insightful results that reflect the participants’ self-study habits and speaking test outcomes.

**3.5 Data analysis**

The data analysis phase involved a blend of automated tools and manual exploration. Google Forms’ integration with SPSS offered a streamlined approach to analyzing responses and generating detailed statistical reports and visualizations. Additionally, data was reviewed and interpreted using Microsoft Excel, allowing for a deeper dive into trends and patterns. This combination of tools ensured that our analysis was both thorough and nuanced, providing a clear understanding of the impact of self-study on speaking skills. In conclusion, the procedures outlined above underscore our commitment to rigorous and innovative research practices, ensuring that our findings are both reliable and actionable.

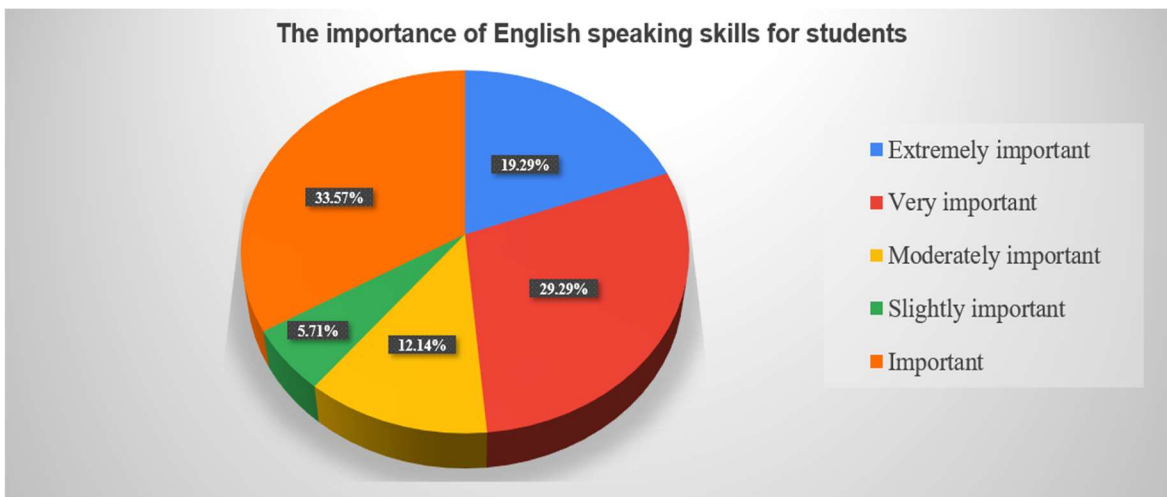
**4. Findings and Discussion**

This chapter reviewed and analyzed the results and findings from the questionnaire on the clear correlation between self-study time and the final exam results in Speaking 1 for second-year English major students at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, the findings gathered from the survey were discussed to highlight the differences and similarities between our study and previous studies.

**4.1 Findings**

*4.1.1 Students’ questionnaire*

*4.1.1.1 Students' perception of the importance of self-study in developing English speaking skills.*



*Figure 1: This reflects the significance students attach to English speaking skills in their education.*

Figure 1 showcases the survey results regarding students' perceived importance of English speaking skills. A notable portion of students, making up 29.29%, rated this skill as very important, while 19.29% viewed it as extremely important. These findings suggest that the majority of respondents appreciate the significance of English communication abilities. Additionally, 33.57% of

students considered this skill important, whereas 5.71% and 12.14% rated it as moderately important and slightly important, respectively. Overall, the survey results indicate that most students acknowledge the valuable role of English speaking skills in their academic pursuits. However, a small percentage of students do not place a high value on this skill.

<b>Self-study helps improve your English-speaking skills.</b>	
Agree	54.29%
Neutral	5%
Strongly agree	40.71%
<b>Self-study boosts your confidence when speaking English.</b>	
Agree	52.86%
Neutral	8.57%
Strongly agree	38.57%

The survey of IUH students reveals a strong consensus on the positive impact of self-study on English-speaking skills. A majority (54.29%) agree that self-study aids skill improvement, with an additional 40.71% strongly agreeing, highlighting the perceived benefits of self-directed learning. Only a small proportion (5%) remain neutral, indicating an overall recognition of self-study's value for enhancing speaking abilities. Likewise, regarding confidence-building, 52.86% agree, and 38.57% strongly agree that self-study boosts their confidence in speaking English. With only 8.57% neutral and no respondents disagreeing, the findings underscore a clear consensus on the importance of self-study in fostering speaking proficiency.

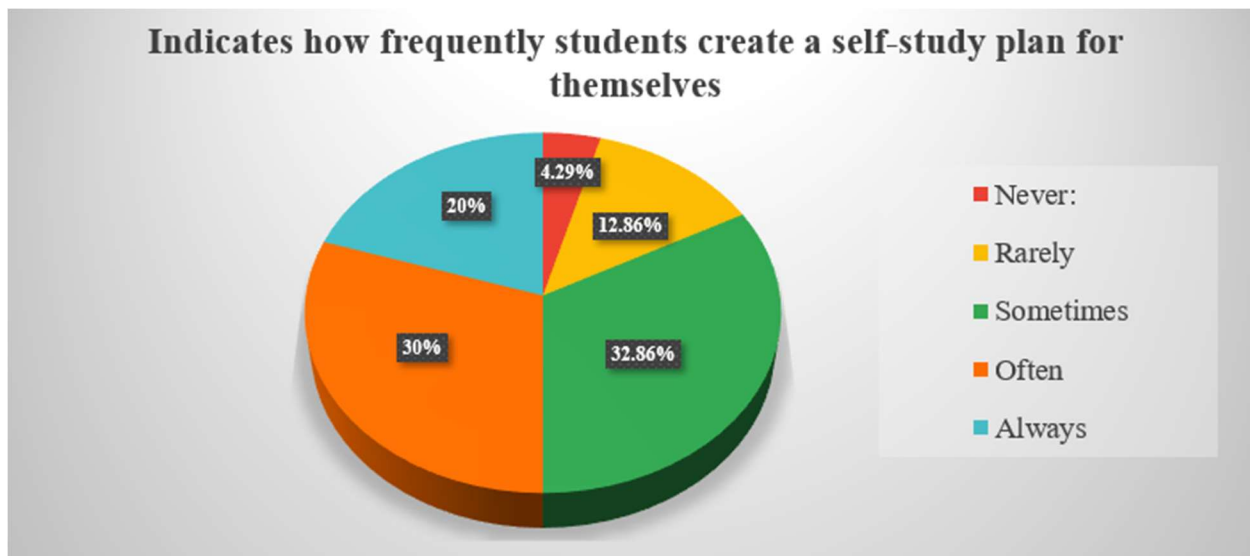
<b>Self-study is the best way to improve English-speaking skills.</b>	
Agree	68.57%
Neutral	5.71%
Strongly agree	25.71%

<b>Self-studying helps you overcome the limitations of classroom speaking practicing time and/or crowded class.</b>	
Agree	47.14%
Neutral	7.14%
Strongly agree	45.71%

<b>Self-studying helps you overcome the limitations of classroom speaking practicing time and/or crowded class.</b>	
Agree	55%
Neutral	5.71%
Strongly agree	39.29%

<b>Illustrates the impact of self-study on students' understanding of English speaking topics in their lessons.</b>	
Yes	90%
No	10%

The data indicates a strong endorsement of self-study among IUH students for improving English-speaking skills. Specifically, 68.57% agree and 25.71% strongly agree that self-study is the best method, with only 5.71% neutral and no disagreement reported. Additionally, 47.14% agree and 45.71% strongly agree that self-study helps them overcome classroom limitations, like limited speaking time and crowded classes, while only 7.14% remain neutral. Self-study is also seen as essential for class preparation, with 55% agreeing and 39.29% strongly agreeing, leaving just 5.71% neutral. Furthermore, 90% believe self-study enhances their understanding of lesson content, with only 10% dissenting. Overall, the survey demonstrates a clear and positive consensus on the importance of self-study for language improvement, overcoming classroom constraints, effective preparation, and content comprehension.



*Figure 2: The frequency with which students create a self-study plan for themselves.*

Figure 2 depicts how frequently students create self-study plans. Notably, 46 students (approximately 32.86%) occasionally make plans, making this the most common frequency among the survey participants. Meanwhile, 42 students (30%) frequently make plans, and 28 students (20%) consistently maintain this habit, suggesting a considerable portion are dedicated to self-study. On the other hand, 18 students (around 12.86%) rarely make plans, and 6 students (4.29%) never create self-study plans, indicating a small segment lacks interest in organizing their personal study process. In general, this data highlights the variety in students' self-study habits, with most showing some level of preparation, though a notable portion lacks the habit of planning.

**4.1.1.2 The Correlation between Self-Study Time and Speaking 1 Exam Results of Foreign Language Students**

Time	No students	(%)	4.0 – 4.5		5.0 – 6.0		6.5 – 7.5		8.0 – 9.0	
Less than 4 hours	25	17.86%	22	15.71%	2	1.42%	1	0.71%	0	0
4 - 8 hours	46	32.86%	0	0	39		5		2	1.42%

						27.85%		3.57%		
<b>8 - 10 hours</b>	48	34.29%	0	0	6	4.28%	38	27.14%	4	2.85%
<b>More than 10 hours</b>	21	15%	0	0	4	2.85%	8	5.71%	9	6.42%

The data table shows the correlation between self-study time and the final exam results in the Speaking subject of second-year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Students who self-study for less than 4 hours (17.86%) tend to have lower scores, mainly between 4.0 and 4.5 (15.71%). The group that self-studied between 4 and 8 hours (32.86%) showed significant improvement, with 27.85% scoring between 5 and 6 and a small number achieving scores between 8 and 9. The group that self-studies between 8 and 10 hours (34.29%) achieves the highest results, with 27.14% scoring between 6.5 and 7.5, and 2.95% scoring between 8.0 and 9.0. However, the group that self-studies for more than 10 hours (15%) does not show significant improvement compared to the 8–10-hour group. In summary, most students achieve good results, but the percentage of students achieving excellent scores remains low, indicating the need for supportive measures to improve the quality of learning.

#### 4.1.1.3 Common Activities for Self-Practice in Speaking Skills Outside of Class

Activities	(%)
Practice speaking English all the time like texting, chatting or calling friends	78.57%
Practice with Language Exchange Partners: Hello Talk, Tandem,..	89,25%
Join debate clubs run by English clubs at school.	61.43%
Participating in podcasts	35.71%
Shadowing Technique	82.14%
Record Yourself Speaking	17.86%
Switch to using English as if it were your native language when communicating with friends at school.	53.57%.
Take part in tour guiding activities at your workplace.	67,85%

Notably, 125 students (approximately 89.25%) use language exchange platforms such as HelloTalk and Tandem, indicating this as a highly preferred method. Additionally, 115 students (82.14%) use the shadowing technique, further suggesting a strong preference for structured self-study practices. Practicing speaking English regularly with friends is also common, with 110 students (78.57%) engaging in this activity. Meanwhile, 86 students (61.43%) join debate clubs at school, and 75 students (53.57%) switch to using English as their primary communication language with friends. A smaller group, 50 students (35.71%), participate in podcasts, while 25 students (17.86%) record themselves speaking. Finally, 95 students (67.86%) take part in tour guiding activities at their workplace. Overall, these results reflect a broad range of self-practice methods, with language exchange and shadowing techniques being the most popular choices among students.

**4.1.1.4 Key Factors Students Believe Impact Their English Speaking Self-Study**

<b>The factor that students believe has the most significant impact on self-taught English speaking.</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Lack of vocabulary	82%
Lack of confidence	92.80%
Fear of making mistakes	60.70%
Lack of communication environment	100%
Crowded class	7.14%
Teacher interaction	46.40%
Limited time for practicing inside their class	42.8%
No partners to practice with	64.20%
Busy for practicing outside their class	24.2%
Study materials	15%
Personal motivation	20%

Based on the data collected, it's evident that several factors influence IUH students' ability to self-study English, particularly speaking skills. Among these, the lack of a communicative environment stands out as the most significant, recognized by 100% of students. This highlights the pressing need for creating more opportunities for students to practice English in real-life contexts, such as through clubs or extracurricular events. Moreover, the issue of lacking confidence, affecting 92.8% of students, suggests many may feel anxious or pressured when expressing themselves in another language. Providing psychological support or programs to boost confidence could be highly beneficial. In addition, 82% of students indicated that a lack of vocabulary is a substantial barrier, underscoring the importance of expanding vocabulary through effective learning methods like contextual

learning or using digital tools. Furthermore, the absence of practice partners, pointed out by 64.2% of students, shows that participation in study groups could be advantageous. Fear of making mistakes, impacting 60.7% of students, reflects a psychological barrier that can be addressed by fostering a non-judgmental learning environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning journey. Interaction with teachers is also crucial, as indicated by 46.4% of students, showing that teachers play a vital role in guiding and motivating students. The limited time for in-class practice, mentioned by 42.8% of students, poses a challenge on how teaching methods could be enhanced to increase language practice time during lessons. Meanwhile, 24.2% of students expressed being too busy to practice outside class, which indicates the need for promoting balance between study and other activities. Study materials and classroom conditions are less frequently seen as major obstacles, with only 15% and 7.14% of students concerned, respectively. However, this does not imply these factors can be entirely overlooked. Ensuring appropriate study materials and well-organized classes still plays a supportive role in effective learning. Finally, personal motivation is another factor to consider, with 20% of students feeling a lack of it. This could be improved through strategies that encourage and support personal development.

#### 4.1.1.5 Students' Satisfaction Ratings for Their Speaking 1 Exam Scores

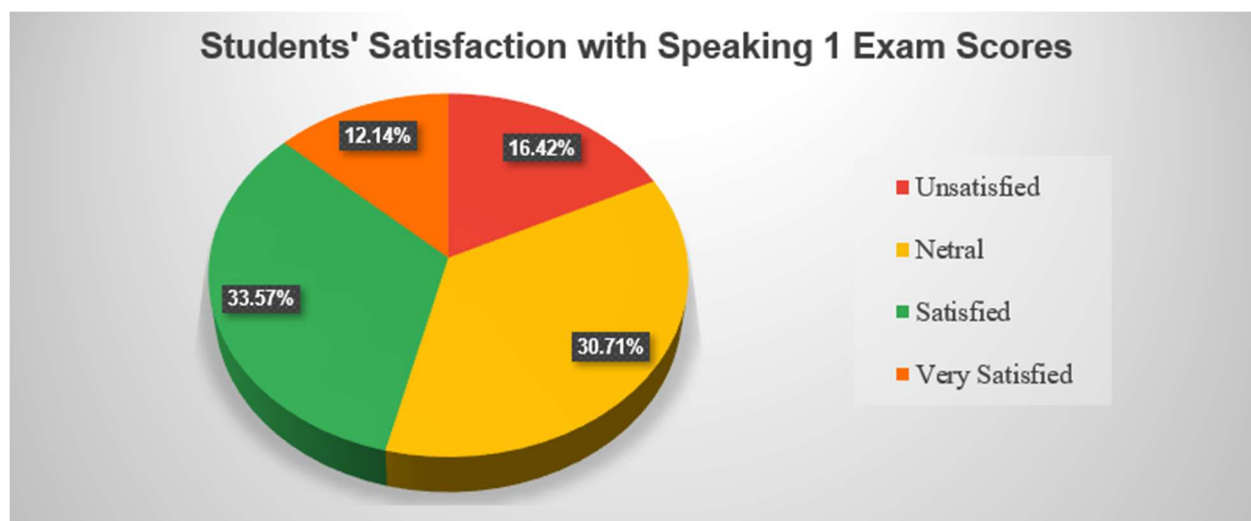


Figure 3: Overview of Student Satisfaction with Speaking 1 Exam Results

Figure 3 shows a range of feelings regarding the Speaking 1 exam scores among second-year English majors at IUH. About 16.42% of students are "unsatisfied," pointing to the need for more support to help them reach their goals. A larger portion, around 30.71%, feels "neutral," indicating a chance for teachers to encourage more engagement and goal setting. Meanwhile, approximately 33.57% of students are "satisfied," suggesting their scores match their expectations and they might benefit from challenges to further develop their skills. Lastly, 12.14% of students are "very satisfied," usually exceeding their expectations, which could prepare them for leadership or peer mentoring roles. This variety of satisfaction levels highlights different student experiences and suggests ways for educators to tailor their support and enhance each student's journey in learning a language.

## 4.2 Discussion

In this section, we delve into the implications of our findings, examining how the correlation between self-study habits and speaking proficiency. Through this discussion, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the role self-study plays in language acquisition and the potential strategies that can be implemented to optimize learning outcomes for students.

#### *4.2.1 Self-Study Time and Speaking Proficiency*

The results show a clear connection: the more time students dedicate to self-study, the better they tend to perform in speaking. Students who devoted 8 to 10 hours a week saw the most improvement. However, beyond 10 hours, the benefits seemed to level off. This suggests there's a sweet spot in terms of study time where students get the most bang for their buck.

#### *4.2.2 Motivational and Environmental Influences*

Motivation and having the right learning environment are also incredibly important. Many students face challenges like lacking confidence or fearing mistakes, which can really hold them back. Having supportive spaces like language labs and conversation clubs can make a big difference. Additionally, keeping anxiety levels low helps with absorbing new language skills.

In summary, learning to speak English effectively isn't just about learning in the books—it's also about having the right attitude and learning conditions. Moving forward, we should look at ways to boost student motivation and confidence for improved language learning experiences.

### **5. Conclusion**

Speaking skills are among the fundamental and indispensable elements for language learners, particularly for second-year students enrolled in the Speaking 1 course at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). This course provides students with valuable opportunities to strengthen their speaking abilities through both independent study and in-class speaking activities. Building strong speaking skills not only enables students to successfully complete the course but also establishes a solid groundwork for effective communication in the future. Nevertheless, many students still face challenges in enhancing their speaking skills, particularly when preparing for the Speaking 1 exam. This study seeks to address three key questions: (1) Which factors affect students' self-study abilities in improving their speaking skills? (2) How does the level of self-study correlate with students' Speaking 1 exam performance? (3) What solutions can support students in advancing their speaking skills and fostering greater learning autonomy? The findings identify several critical factors that impact students' self-study and speaking skills, including “lack of confidence,” “limited self-study skills,” and “difficulties in time management and self-study techniques.” Additionally, the study highlights that limited vocabulary, challenges in structuring ideas, and inadequate preparation are major barriers preventing students from achieving desired results in speaking assessments. At the same time, the research outlines effective strategies that students employ to tackle these challenges, such as consistent practice, implementing creative study methods, and nurturing self-motivation. Insights gathered from a survey of 140 students provide a valuable foundation for designing practical solutions to enhance students' speaking skills and promote their autonomy. These findings illuminate the connection between self-study and speaking exam performance while offering valuable recommendations to improve teaching and learning practices at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, IUH.

#### **5.1 Recommendations**

##### *5.1.1 Strategies and Strengthening English Proficiency*

To begin with, the Faculty of Foreign Languages should actively encourage students to participate in the school's English club, where they can enhance their speaking skills through consistent practice in a supportive environment. Engaging in club activities, such as discussions, debates, and presentations, allows students to gain confidence and develop effective communication skills in English. Furthermore, students are encouraged to utilize online resources like TED Talks, Duo-lingo, and YouTube, which offer valuable tips and practical exercises for improving their speaking abilities. These platforms allow students to learn independently, offering access to expert insights and diverse examples to guide their progress. In addition, fostering interaction with international students at IUH can provide students with real-life language practice. Conversing with both native and non-

native English speakers broadens students' understanding of various accents and communication styles, making them more adaptable in real-world conversations. The Faculty could also organize more targeted activities, such as English speech competitions, to help students further develop their speaking skills. These events not only give students a chance to showcase their abilities but also inspire them to practice and excel. Finally, participating in podcasts can serve as an effective way for students to refine their speaking skills. Engaging in podcast discussions helps students articulate their ideas clearly and coherently, offering a dynamic avenue for practice. Through these combined efforts, students can strengthen their English-speaking skills, equipping them for success in future academic and professional endeavors.

### *5.1.2 Enhancing Interaction with Native Speakers through Exchange Programs and Cultural Activities*

The FFL should establish exchange programs and organize cultural events to enhance students' English proficiency. Exchange programs immerse students in English-speaking environments, improving language skills and cultural understanding through real-world interactions.

Cultural activities such as international days and workshops with guest speakers from English-speaking countries provide additional practice opportunities and exposure to different accents and perspectives. Encouraging students to join study-abroad programs offers firsthand experiences with native speakers, boosting their confidence and fluency.

By implementing these initiatives, the Faculty can significantly enhance students' English proficiency, preparing them for future global opportunities.

## **5.2 Limitations of the study**

Studying has several limitations. It focuses on a narrow sample—second-year students from one university—which limits broader generalization. Reliance on self-reported data could lead to inaccuracies due to bias and varied interpretations. Measuring learning autonomy is intricate and not easily captured by existing tools. This research identifies correlations but not causal links. By concentrating only on speaking skills, the study may miss interconnections with other language skills. Additionally, environmental and cultural impacts on learning are significant but insufficiently examined. The short duration also restricts observing long-term effects. Future research should address these issues for deeper insights.

## **5.3 Further study**

Due to constraints in time and resources, this study primarily examines the relationship between self-study time and English speaking exam results, offering initial insights into this connection. Nonetheless, additional research is necessary to delve into specific facets of learning autonomy and its impact on language acquisition, particularly in improving the speaking skills of second-year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Future investigations could explore factors such as the type and quality of self-study activities, individual motivation, and the role of feedback in the self-learning process. Considering these elements might provide a clearer understanding of how learning autonomy affects language proficiency, thereby suggesting effective teaching strategies and support to enhance the speaking skills of language learners.

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