An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

An Inquiry into the Impact of the Mother Tongue on Vietnamese Adult EFL Learners’ Speech Intelligibility with Reference to Syllable Structure

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate how the mother tongue of 50 Vietnamese university EFL students impacts on their intelligibility in oral communication, with specific reference to syllable structure. The assumption is that there is interference between the native language (L1) and the new language (L2), and negative transfer of native oral usage habits to the target language, which affects the students’ intelligibility. Additionally, the current study also examines other potential reasons for the participating students having pronunciation errors. Mixed methods for data collection and analysis – a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach – have been used to explore these issues. The quantitative data and results provide the general picture of the research problem, whereas further analysis and rich data gained through qualitative data collection have refined, extended, and explained the intelligibility problem of Vietnamese English speakers in depth. The findings show that Vietnamese adult EFL speakers’ intelligibility is so low and that syllable structure errors impact on the students’ speech intelligibility. The syllable structure errors are generally caused by the application of Vietnamese syllable structure in the pronunciation of English syllables in the pronunciation tests. For instance, Vietnamese open syllables were used by the 50 informants to articulate English close syllables during the pronunciation tests. The results indicate that these pronunciation habits affect the speakers’ intelligibility. The outcomes also reveal that insufficient pronunciation instruction, and a lack of practice and exposure to authentic language, particularly to English-speaking people, are major causes of their significant low intelligibility. These findings are confirmed by those gained from the analysis of the qualitative data, which were collected through four semi-structured interviews with four Vietnamese university teachers of English and ten independent interviews with ten volunteer students. In addition, the data from these interviews revealed that oversized
classes and time limitations are also causes of the participants’ weaknesses in pronunciation, because students have little or no chance to use English in practice and in oral communication. Last but not least, the outcomes that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire suggest that pronunciation assessment should be introduced in language learning institutions. This would be a powerful means to enhance the students’ pronunciation and motivate them to engage in practicing oral output and verbal communication during their learning process.

Key words: Mother Tongue, Syllable structure and Intelligibility
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility in their English communication with reference to syllable structure. There are three reasons why this topic has been chosen: personal, socio-cultural and pedagogic. Personal – besides my personal interest in this topic I have had firsthand experience with the difficulties in developing English sounds as a Vietnamese native speaker, and I wished to find out what the main causes for this problem are. Socio-cultural – Vietnam is in the process of internationalizing its economy and taking a more active part in world trade. The mastery of English and the understanding of English culture and ways of communication is of pivotal importance for Vietnamese politics and economy. Pedagogic: teachers should be made aware of learners’ difficulties and gain a clear picture about their students’ pronunciation problems so that they can meaningfully intervene and attempt to better equip their students with more intelligible pronunciation skills.

1. OVERVIEW

This chapter is organized in the following way: first it identifies the research problem, which is followed by a description of the research background. Next it explains why research into pronunciation of Vietnamese learners’ English pronunciation is justified, in particular at the syllable level and outlines the research purpose and its significance. Lastly, this chapter ends with the specified research questions.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Vietnamese adult ESL/EFL learners make errors in using their English in practice, which affect their speech intelligibility since they have a tendency as do all ESL/EFL learners to apply their first language habits to the target language pronunciation (English pronunciation). Such a tendency has been identified by Avery and Ehrlich (1992), who claimed “[t]he sound
pattern of the learner’s first language is transferred into the second language and this is likely to cause foreign accents” (p.4). This accords with Odline (1989), Ioup and Weimberger (1987), and Van Pattern’s (1998) research findings, who all suggested that L1 transfer was probably the major source of difficulty in interlanguage phonology. Recently, in Vietnam, this issue has also become of great concern to educators, English instructors and researchers, from which some studies about Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ first language and the intelligibility of their English have emerged. The findings, for instance in Dang’s (2006), Ha’s (2005), or in Nguyen’s studies (2007), suggested that Vietnamese adult EFL learners had serious pronunciation problems brought about by their first language, making their speech unintelligible.

3. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

English plays a very important role in Vietnamese tertiary education. However, the fact is that a high percentage of students are not able to use English in verbal communication since they have significant difficulties in making themselves understood and comprehending what others say (Dang, 2006; Ha, 2005). This is largely because “[t]he majority of Vietnamese adult EFL learners have problems with English pronunciation” (Ha, 2005, p.1), which affects both their speaking and listening skills. This statement is in line with Robertson’s (2003) finding that “[w]ithout adequate pronunciation skills the learner's ability to communicate is severely limited” (p.8). As a tertiary educator and a Vietnamese learner of English as a Foreign Language, I witnessed and also experienced firsthand pronunciation problems, and this circumstance accounts for my interest in exploring why Vietnamese speakers have this problem and why their spoken English is so hard for interlocutors to understand. It is hoped that uncovering the reasons for English pronunciation difficulties in Vietnamese speakers and raising teachers’ awareness of this problem will result in clear implications of an ethno-specific approach to pronunciation pedagogy.
Vietnam has been carrying out its so called “Open Gate Policy” in order to develop its economy and enhance its political position in the world for the past few years. English is chosen as the communication tool for bilateral and multilateral business meetings and political conferences with foreign investors and world leaders. This means that English is prevalently used in oral interactions which mainly involve speaking and listening skills. The intelligibility of the interlocutors’ speech is largely influenced by their English pronunciation (Gilbert, 1995; Robertson, 2003; Wong, 1993), and therefore acquiring intelligible pronunciation is of pivotal importance.

The Open Gate Policy also impacted on the official decision to introduce English as a compulsory subject into almost all schools and universities in Vietnam in the early 1990s (after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989), replacing Russian, which had been a study requirement as the only compulsory foreign language in the previous decades. Currently, “English is learnt in six out of eight semesters in all undergraduate degrees, making up the largest proportion in comparison to other subjects” (Bui, 2006, p.1). In English instruction at tertiary level, there is more attention paid to the development of students’ oral communication skills; however at high schools, grammar and reading are still the first priorities since the assessment practices have not been changed and the learners’ English competence is measured by grammar-based tests. For this reason, it is not surprising that after leaving high school and moving on to university, the communicative competence of many students is very low (Dang 2006). Even in tertiary education, developing students’ oral competence is paid little more than lip service. The neglect in training Vietnamese university students’ English speaking and listening skills is partly identified by Bui’s (2006) study conducted at Hanoi College of Science, Vietnam National University. She claimed:
The textbooks cover four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, at the end of each semester, students are assessed based on a written test on reading and writing skills only. As a result, many students and even teachers are examination-oriented. (p. 3) Bui (2006) further suggested “[t]he teachers spend time developing reading and writing skills while ignoring listening and speaking skills. This is likely to happen not at a single university in Vietnam, but across the whole spectrum” (p. 3).

4. **WHY PRONUNCIATION AT SYLLABLE LEVEL**

In Vietnamese educational institutions if pronunciation is taught, it is usually only taught at segmental level. This is underpinned by Ha (2005), who claimed:

> Vietnamese learners encounter great difficulties in learning English pronunciation for several reasons. Firstly, the English sound system has several sounds foreign to Vietnamese speakers. Secondly, the way English speakers pronounce the ending sounds is completely different from the one deeply rooted in Vietnamese speakers, making it more difficult for them to achieve appropriate English pronunciation. Consequently, Vietnamese learners have been reported to make phonetic errors leading to incomprehensible speech in English. (p. 2)

Therefore, in the conclusion of her study she recommended to all her colleagues that teachers in English departments should pay attention to teaching segments. Such an emphasis on teaching segmental features is also pointed out by Bui (2006), who stated “[w]hen dealing with pronunciation, teachers simply turn on the tape to let students listen and repeat. Few teachers stop to explain to students the mechanism of producing sounds. Consequently, students easily forget the correct pronunciation of words” (p. 10). However, some studies, such as Yoshida (2012) have highlighted the importance of syllable structure of pronunciation and suggested that students should be helped to practice the patterns of syllable structure to make their speech more understandable. This is because, she further stated students whose
languages have different syllable structure rules than English may have trouble pronouncing some English words. This was also recognized by Nakishima (2006), who claimed that among the suprasegmental errors, syllable structure errors have a strong impact on the intelligibility of language output of Japanese English speakers.

The weaknesses in oral communication exposed by the majority of research undertaken on Vietnamese university students and Vietnamese adults in general are likely to slow down the achievement of the current government’s goals of integration with the world in terms of economy, education and politics. The question naturally emerging from this situation is how to deal with the issue of poor educational outcomes despite the declared main goal of the English Syllabus to focus on enhancing students’ oral communication skills. There are numerous factors that have led to this contradiction. Bui (2006) believed that the assessment practices were one factor because the examinations were still based on writing and reading. If so, it would be rational to suggest that four-skill-based examinations should be offered with a main focus on speaking and listening. However, this is not as simple as suggested. The traditional reasons for no oral examinations are lack of teachers’ knowledge of pronunciation, and lack of teachers’ knowledge of how to teach it and assess it (Dang, 2004).

First of all, it is important to examine how English pronunciation has been taught and learnt in the classrooms and how much importance is attributed to it. Hinofotis and Baily (1980) discussed the priorities in terms of teaching the macro skills in a foreign language. They reported that “up to a certain proficiency standard, the pronunciation problems of EFL/ESL learners impacted the communication process, very much more than deficiencies in vocabulary or grammar” (p. 124). Likewise, Wong (1987) pointed out that “[e]ven when the non-native speakers’ vocabulary and grammar are excellent, if their pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level, they are unable to communicate efficiently and effectively” (p.5). This view can be seen to be true in the current Vietnamese setting. Indeed, surveys conducted
by Dang in 2009 show that university students, when asked, “Which skills are you worst at?”, not surprisingly chose (92 out of the 100 participants) listening and speaking skills in their responses. They had not been taught English pronunciation explicitly and although they displayed quite a solid knowledge of grammar rules and possessed a quite extensive vocabulary, they had difficulties with communicating in English.

My own class observation notes made about twelve Vietnamese teachers of English (in 2009) reflect that even if there was explicit teaching of pronunciation it was concentrated on the mastery of segments. They either focused on discrimination and production of target sounds via drills consisting of minimal pairs, or the adult EFL learners were requested to repeat new words or phrases after the Vietnamese teachers. These words were written onto the white board and translated. The learners were not given any opportunity to interact with their teachers or with each other in groups. In addition, the listening activity was ignored even though it was included in the textbook (Dang 2009). The lack of explanation about how to form the sounds of English was also noted by Bui (2006), who claimed “[s]tudents could not produce the correct pronunciation of words since few teachers explained to them the mechanism of producing sounds” (p.3). This problem is often compounded by the students’ own lack of awareness of their communication and pronunciation problems, particularly related to syllable structures, which play a crucial role in English pronunciation instruction. As Wong (1993) emphasized:

Teaching speech from the perspective of suprasegmentals (including syllable structure) seems indispensable for the purpose of achieving real communication. Learning pronunciation should not be limited to comparing individual vowel and consonant sounds in a given word, as has often been the case with pronunciation learning in the past. Focusing on individual vowel and consonant sounds is only the first step in learning to speak and understand English. (p.19)
Moreover, as a result of over 15 years of being a teacher of English at universities and English centers in Ho Chi Minh City and its neighboring cities, I was often requested to give suggestions about how to improve oral communication skills of Vietnamese speakers. I have reflected on my own teaching and asked myself and my colleagues how to improve teaching pronunciation to university students in the classroom. This continuously posed question has not up to now yielded satisfying answers. There does not exist a universal pedagogic ‘recipe’ that would fit all learners’ language learning needs. This is also supported by Robertson (2003), who claimed, “[n]o English teaching program is good for all, because the field of EFL research must be intensified and be culturally specific, and … no instructional material in language teaching is effective in all social culture contexts” (p.13).

The awareness of the culture-specific nature of students’ pedagogic needs is, along with personal language acquisition factors and teaching experiences, another motivator that prompted this research. The empirical investigations in this research aim to fill the current knowledge gap and respond to the question of why Vietnamese students have difficulties in learning English pronunciation, particularly syllable structure.

Linguists and researchers suggest that learning English pronunciation really challenges adult EFL learners in many countries, particularly Asian countries such as China, Korea, or Japan because of the enormous difference in pronunciation between the English language and the EFL learners’ mother tongues. Therefore, several studies, such as phonological contrastive studies conducted by Kota (2004), Cho and Park (2006), and Zhang and Yin (2009), aim at assisting teachers of English in diverse countries like China, Japan, or South Korea, and helping learners to master English pronunciation. Similarly, in Vietnam, there are also a few small scale studies that have been conducted and published in this field (Ha, 2005; Nguyen, 2007; Patil, 2003). These studies are descriptive and contrastive and focus on understanding the difference in pronunciation between English consonants and Vietnamese consonants,
Nguyen (2007), however, narrows down her study and lists and analyzes Vietnamese adult learners’ common errors in the English final consonants.

The common feature of these studies is that they explore only segmental elements of the two languages. They do not take into account the tonal nature of Vietnamese language when analyzing the learners’ errors, particularly in syllable structure. This points to a clearly identified need for undertaking further research at syllable level in order to expand and refine the knowledge already gained on pronunciation errors of Vietnamese speakers.

In sum, the background reasons for this research are: to achieve better oral skills for global communication; to investigate how pronunciation could be enhanced as a result of failed traditional teaching approaches; to assess the implications of a lack of teaching of syllable structures and in the assessment of pronunciation quality.

5. **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

By investigating how the mother tongue of 50 Vietnamese adult EFL learners impacts on their speech intelligibility at suprasegmental level, examining what and how Vietnamese students are taught and how they learn English with a special focus on English pronunciation at a specific university in Vietnam, this study aims at:

- promoting a better understanding of Vietnamese adult English learners’ articulation difficulties particularly with syllable structure.
- enhancing the understanding of linguistic differences between the English language and the Vietnamese language in respect of syllables.
- identifying implications for the enhancement of English pronunciation of adult Vietnamese students.

6. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The above stated research objectives gave rise to the following key research question:
How does their native language affect Vietnamese adult English language learners’ speech intelligibility at the syllable level? From this, the following sub-questions emerged:

- Is the investigated cohort of students’ speech unintelligible?
- How does syllable structure affect their intelligibility?
- Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?
- What are the pedagogical implications of the findings?

7. **SIGNIFICANCE**

The outcomes of this investigation will benefit English speakers who want to learn Vietnamese, Vietnamese teachers of English and native English teachers who teach or would like to teach English to Vietnamese learners, English learning theoreticians and researchers, and intercultural communication experts, sociolinguists and psycholinguists.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

In this literature review, a critical review and discussion will be presented on the following topics: i. the role of pronunciation including segmentals and syllables, the role of the mother tongue on second language pronunciation development, previous studies about pronunciation issues between the tonal Vietnamese language and the English language; ii. intelligibility; iii. relationships between segmentals, suprasegmentals toward syllable structures and intelligibility; and iv. ESL/EFL pronunciation instruction and its impacts on intelligibility.

2. PRONUNCIATION

2.1 Segmentals and syllables

Segmentals and syllables are two close interrelated domains associated with pronunciation. The segmentals represent the basic inventory of individual sounds, the phonemes of the language, which can be combined to form a spoken language known as a syllable or a word. For instance, there are three sounds /b/, /æ/ and /t/, combined together to produce the single syllable word ‘bat’ physically, which is just one continuous sound (Fromkin, Rodman, Collin and Blair, 1990). In other words, phonemes are the smallest elements which constitute a word syllable of a language. Thus, the mastery of segmentals is crucial in language pronunciation instruction. This view is shared by Jenkins (2000), who claimed that instruction in segmentals should be prioritized since most of the pronunciation problems identified in her study could be attributed to the difficulty in producing segmentals. In the case of British English, the segmentals are composed of 20 vowels and 24 consonants. They are the basic sounds which serve to distinguish words from one another.

However, beyond the individual sounds are syllables and other suprasegmental features, which are produced unconsciously by native speakers or fluent non-native speakers. Syllables
play an important role in the rhythm of speech as Roach (2000, p. 127) suggested that even if people cannot define what a syllable is, they can count how many syllables there are in a given word or sentence by tapping their finger as they count. Thus, they provide crucial context and support (i.e. they determine meaning) for segmental production (see section 2.2.2.2, p.19 for more details).

2.2 Mother tongue and second language

2.2.1 Studies on the relationships between learners’ mother tongue and their L2 pronunciation

It is not unusual for adult ESL/EFL learners to make errors when using their English in practice since they have the tendency to apply their first language habits to the target language pronunciation (Ellis, 1997). This is also reflected by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967) suggesting that adults are not able to achieve native-like pronunciation because their articulators are fixed to produce and form native language sounds and thus they carry over these habits into the second language.

Many linguists have recognized, classified and analysed learners’ pronunciation errors for the purpose of facilitating second language/foreign language teaching and learning. Richards (1974) classified errors according to their origin into two categories: interlingual errors and intralingual developmental errors. A question arising from this is what types of errors linguists are more concerned about. Dulay and Burt (1974) claimed that almost 90 percent of errors were intralingual errors. Odlin (1989) stated “[c]ontrastive linguistics is concerned with interlingual errors because the system of the target language has no uniform effect on second language/foreign language learners’ acquisition capacity” (p.10). It is, therefore, important to highlight that understanding the culture of second language learners and the characteristics of their native language is pivotal for linguists and teachers because it helps them to analyse and understand the nature of the errors learners make.
The Contrastive Analysis approach in linguistics in the 1970s attempted to map the linguistic differences between pairs of languages, but it was criticized for its inadequacy to predict the transfer errors that learners will make in actual learning contexts (Whitman & Jackson, 1972). The assumption that the native language and negative transfer are the major sources of difficulties in interlanguage phonology was also underpinned by Odlin (1989), Ioup and Weimberger (1987), and Van Patten (1998). Various further studies deserve to be mentioned in this context, for example Purcell and Suter (1980), who investigated a number of variables that had been identified by previous studies as potentially good predictors of pronunciation accuracy. They argued that of twenty such variables, only four were indeed true predictors of high levels of pronunciation attainment, namely, learner’s first language (L1), aptitude for oral mimicry, years in an English speaking country and residence with native speakers of English, and strength of concern for pronunciation accuracy.

The significant L1 factor is also pointed out by Avery and Ehrlich (1992), who claimed that the sound pattern of the learner’s first language was transferred into the second language and is likely to cause foreign accents. The influence of Japanese as the first language was investigated by Jenkins (2000), who claimed that most of Japanese EFL learners’ pronunciation errors were caused by their L1 transfer, while Nakashima (2006) argued that most problems in the errors of Japanese learners derived from the difference of possible syllable structures allowed in the two languages. He further stated that these errors were mainly caused by the Japanese open syllables (Consonant Vowel #Vowel – CV#V) applied to pronounce English closed syllables (CVC#V), which leads to words being unlinked in their speech, since Japanese has a very limited number of final syllable consonants (Nakashima, 2006).

While Nakishima’s findings relate to the lack of linking between words (word by word) caused by the application of the Japanese syllable structure in their utterances, (although this
needs to be further investigated), this current research study aims at providing insight into Vietnamese CV syllable structure (open syllables CV.V) applied in the pronunciation of CVC syllable structure (closed syllables CVC.V) and CCV in English word syllables, affecting Vietnamese adult ESL/EFL speakers’ speech intelligibility. This is because the usage of the CV structure in these cases has the potential to give rise to either new words and non-English words rather than the intended words, or clear aspiration between the syllables of polysyllabic words, producing strange prosody to interlocutors (e.g. the close syllable of ‘sell’ could be produced with open syllable as /seo/ by Vietnamese speakers (see section 2.2.2.2, p.19 for more details).

2.2.2 Overview of studies on Vietnamese adult EFL/ESL learners’ problems with pronunciation caused by their mother tongue

There are only a few studies that investigate the relationship between Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ mother tongue and English pronunciation. The majority of these studies on Vietnamese speakers’ English accent were conducted in countries where English is the mainstream language such as in the U.S.A (Huynh, 1965) and in Australia (Ingram and Nguyen, 2007). The few studies on adult English learners’ pronunciation conducted in Vietnam, such as Ha’s (2005), Nguyen’s (2007), and Patil’s (2003) studies seem to be only in internal use in Vietnam. Of these studies, Ha’s (2005) findings seem to be applicable only to a few large universities such as Ha Noi National University and Can Tho University. She claims that the Vietnamese EFL learners’ L1 transfer is commonly identifiable by the way they produce the English consonants and vowels (segmentals).

However, it needs to be mentioned that Ha’s (2005) method has serious flaws. She has neither described her data collection methods nor the assessment procedures that she used for evaluating speakers’ intelligibility. In the statement of the problem section of her study she claimed “[m]any Vietnamese speakers can speak English, but only a few have intelligible English pronunciation.” (Ha, 2005, p.1), but she has not underpinned this claim with
evidence. She did not explain how she measured the speakers’ intelligibility nor did she record what was said by the participants. Apparently, she, as an oral examiner, took notes of errors related to pronunciation while 51 participants, final year students of English teacher education, were speaking in the final oral exams, indicating that she was the sole arbiter of the learners’ speech intelligibility. Measuring speakers’ intelligibility cannot be or should not be undertaken by teachers or listeners who share the first language background with the subjects. Kenworthy (1997) suggested “[t]here are two listener factors that are very important; first the listener’s familiarity with the foreign accent of the examiner and, second, the listener’s ability to use contextual clues when listening” (p. 14). Smith’s (1992) findings revealed that the more familiar listeners (native and non-native alike) were with other varieties of English, the better they could understand the speakers of such English varieties. This is supported by Ingram and Nguyen (2007) in their study showing that the amount of exposure to the target language and familiarity with the accent varieties facilitates the comprehension of native speakers’ speech. Ha’s study seems to list the learners’ pronunciation errors mainly associated with English consonants (part of segmentals) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Learners’ errors from Ha (2005)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of errors</th>
<th>No. of subjects with errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound omitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medial: l, dʒ, r, s, i, ei, k</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final: z, s, t, v, ks, dʒ</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound confusing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = ʈ</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tr = ʈ</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɬ = z, d</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɬ = s</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dʒ = j/d/s/t/z/ ʒ/ɡ/</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s = l/ʃ</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p = b; ɡ = s</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ = s/t/; r = z</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In contrast, Nguyen’s study (2007) has a sound research methodology. She investigated how well five Vietnamese adult EFL speakers were evaluated by six native English listeners with foci on final consonants (part of segmental features). Her study might be also regarded as a contrastive analysis since she made comparisons and contrasts between the English consonant system and the Vietnamese consonant system. Her findings show that Vietnamese adult learners have difficulties with producing final consonants mainly because of negative transfer of rules learned in their mother tongue. Despite these positive characteristics, the validity of her research could still be questioned because she used an unreliable source in her report. Namely, she quoted the list of accented Vietnamese learners’ consonant errors presented by Ha (2005) which takes into account only one Vietnamese dialect.

Patil (2003) is also one of the above group of Vietnamese researchers working in this area. He taught English at the Institute for International Relations, Hanoi, for three years, and with his three years of experience in teaching English in Vietnam, he recognized the pronunciation difficulties of Vietnamese adult learners. As a result, a book entitled Spoken English for Vietnamese Learners was published in 2003. This became a reference source for Vietnamese teachers of English, in which pronunciation is discussed in one chapter. However, his Vietnamese refers to only one dialect, namely the dialect of Hanoi and therefore it is not comprehensive and applicable to Vietnamese in general. For example, he states that “[c]onfusion is made between /tr/ and /ʧ/, /l/ and /n/ sounds by Vietnamese speakers” (Patil, 2003, p. 36). Actually, this confusion only happens with Vietnamese speakers from some cities in the north of Vietnam but is not generalizable due to the fact that people from southern and central Vietnam have no difficulty at all in discriminating between these two pairs (Le, 2008).
Cunningham (2009)’ suggested that Vietnamese speakers shortened pre-vocalic vowels in beat vs bit and beat vs bid, which are perceived as indistinguishable by both native and non-native listeners. Additionally, the influence of Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ mother tongue on their English pronunciation is best illustrated by Cunningham’s conclusion in her report presented at Stockholm University in 2009. She stated:

The intelligibility of Vietnamese speakers of English is a major problem for them and their interlocutors. Not only do they have non-native pronunciation features that are clear instances of transfer from their L1, Vietnamese, they also have other, spontaneous, modifications of the target sounds. This is part of the general variability that characterizes non-native pronunciation, but when the sounds produced are as far from the target sounds as they are in the speech of V1, communication is an extreme effort. (Cunningham, 2009, p. 4)

In addition to the shortcomings mentioned above, syllable structures are another set of pronunciation features which were not included in all these domestic studies. Therefore, it is important to inquire into the inter-relationship between the syllable structures and Vietnamese adult ESL/EFL learners’ speech intelligibility.

2.2.2.1 Contrastive studies of the pronunciation features of the Vietnamese language and the English language.

There are two outstanding studies that deserve to be mentioned here: the Phonological contrastive study of Vietnamese and English and the Cross Linguistic Analysis of Vietnamese and English with Implications for Vietnamese Language Acquisition and Maintenance in the United States. These are two studies which are reliable and valid for references in L2 pronunciation acquisition. The former conducted by Hoa Thi Ngoc Huynh in her masters thesis was approved by Texas Technological college in 1965 and the latter by Giang Ngoc Thuy Tang was published in the Journal of Southeast Asian American Education &
Advancement in 2007. Both studies describe in detail pronunciation features of English and Vietnamese in a contrastive manner. Their research shows researchers and L2 instructors the similarities and dissimilarities between the two sound systems and the possible sound combinations and clusters, assisting L2 students in the mastery of both the segmentals and syllabes of the target language. However, their studies do not focus on examining how difficult it is for some non-native speakers to acquire certain pronunciation aspects of the target language and they did not investigate the dissimilarities that could be the main factors influencing the L2 speaker’s speech. This is largely because these studies are ‘descriptive’ studies which do not deal with language acquisition issues and pedagogy.

Another problem is that Huynh’s (1965) study was conducted 45 years ago when Saigon was the capital of South Vietnam and her study mainly centered on the Saigon dialect. It is widely accepted that language is under constant change in society (Mahoney, 2008). In the Vietnamese language, there are currently three main dialects which are spoken in the northern, central and southern parts of Vietnam. In almost all respects, the Hanoi dialect is recognized as the standard variety, and it is commonly used in the media, high literature and legal documents (Ngo, 2006). This fact is internationally recognized. For example the Department of East Asian Studies from the University of Toronto suggests that the dialect of the national capital Hanoi represents the phonetic system of the standard form of Vietnamese more accurately than the other dialects.

As for Tang’s (2007) study, both segmental elements and syllables are still contentious. For example, she denied the existence of a range of diphthongs in Vietnamese. In a comparison of Vietnamese and English vowels, she suggested that /aɪ/ (in eye) /ɒɪ/ (in oh), /aʊ/ (in how) and /ɔɪ/ (in boy) do not exist in Vietnamese. However, according to Dang (1998, p. 22), these sounds are shared by these two languages. He claimed, “/aɪ, /ɒɪ, /aʊ, and /ɔɪ/ could be found
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similar in ai /ai/ (who), in sâu /səʊ/ (worm), in mau /mæʊ/ (quick), and in coi /kəʊ/ (watch) respectively.” Table 2 reflects the shared and unshared sounds between English and Vietnamese..

Table 2

Comparison of Vietnamese and English vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese Only</th>
<th>Shared Sounds</th>
<th>English Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single tones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e (lè = pear), u (tr = fourth)</td>
<td>i (xin or see), æ (lâm or had)</td>
<td>I (kid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A (cut)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>œ (thunder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>z (urgent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthongs</td>
<td>/ie/ (biên), /uo/ (cuốn)</td>
<td>/ai/ (mai or eye), /Ωi/ (sau or how), /ɔi/ (soi or boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/uo/ trưọt</td>
<td>/aɪ/ (suy), /ue/ (Huế), /uə/ (thuọt), /uə/ khoẹ, /ɔa/ hoa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/æ/ (bake)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-vowel combinations</td>
<td>/aj/ (chơi), /uəj/ (chười), /oj/ (nỗi), /uəj/ (lài), /aj/ (chai), /ɔj/ (vói), /ɔj/ (cây), /aj/ (cay), /iw/ (râu)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(medial vowel –u –and principal vowel)</td>
<td>/iæ/ (Diana)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-vowel combinations</td>
<td>/æj/ khoai, /uəj/ (nuôi), /uəj/ mươi, /uəj/ khuya, /uəj/ (uây)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(principal vowel with final semi-vowel)</td>
<td>/iɪ/ (pronunciation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-vowel combinations</td>
<td>/iəw/ nhiêu, /uəw/ (maybe =/ząw/) (hروع), /ɔj/ khoai, /uəj/ (nuôi), /uəj/ mươi, /uəj/ khuya, /uəj/ (uây)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(medial vowel –u –and principal vowel and final semi-vowel)</td>
<td>/iəw/ (stereo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2.2 Vietnamese and English syllable structures

A number of linguists, for example Hoa Thi Quynh Huynh (1965), Tien Ngoc Dung Dang (1998) and Giang Ngoc Thuy Tang (2007), undertook and published comparisons between Vietnamese and English sounds and their combination in speech and have successfully identified similarities and dissimilarities in their studies. However, none of these studies show how difficult it is for Vietnamese adult ESL/EFL learners to overcome the dissimilarities and how they struggle in attaining intelligible speech particularly in syllables. In this literature review, comparisons of syllable structures are made between the Vietnamese and the English language to explain why Vietnamese learners have trouble with English syllables that probably affect their pronunciation.

The major difference in syllable structures between English and Vietnamese is likely to be a major factor affecting Vietnamese adult ESL/EFL learners’ syllabic pronunciation. In the English language, there are various types of syllable structure, such as consonant vowel (CV) then CVC, CCVC, CCCVC, and CCCVCC (Erickson, 2001). As in Thai and Chinese, it is widely accepted that in Vietnamese a syllable consists of two compulsory elements: a tone and a nuclear vowel. Beside the four tones shared with Thai and Chinese, namely mid, low, falling, and rising, (Mok, 2007; Zhang, 1996), Vietnamese has a low-falling-rising tone and a low-falling broken tone. This syllable structure is supported by Ngo (2006), who suggested:

Each syllable consists of two mandatory components: a tone and a nuclear vowel; in addition, three optional components may be present: an initial consonant, a sound indicating the labialization (rounding of the lips) of the syllable, and a final consonant or semivowel. (p. 7)

The syllable structure of the Vietnamese language is displayed in Table 3 as presented by the authors Dang, 2006, Doan, 1999, Ngo, 2006, and Tang, 2007. Figure 1 illustrates the six
Vietnamese tones: 1) mid-level tone (ma = ghost), 2) low-falling tone (mà = but), 3) high-rising tone (má = mother), 4) low-falling-rising tone (mả = grave), 5) high-rising broken tone (mã = horse), 6) low(est)-falling broken tone (mạ = plate). The following diagram visualises the Vietnamese tones.

![Diagram of Vietnamese tones]

**Figure 1.** The Vietnamese tones


The following Table presents the Vietnamese syllable structure.

**Table 3**

**Vietnamese syllable structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TONE</th>
<th>Syllable-initial sound</th>
<th>Medial</th>
<th>Nuclear vowel</th>
<th>Final sound or semi vowel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/u/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vietnamese is an Asian tonal language with a simpler syllable structure than English. It is widely accepted that CV or CVC plus a tone are the two basic syllable structures in the Vietnamese language. CV is considered as an open syllable which is defined by Cox and Mannell (2009) as a syllable that ends with a vowel. They further stated “[n]o syllable has more than one vowel. Vowel-like sequences in a single syllable are interpreted as diphthongs or semi-vowel plus vowel sequences” (Cox and Mannell, 2009, p. 3). Therefore, the vowels in the open syllable CV structure include diphthongs or a vowel plus semi-vowel. Meanwhile, CVC is regarded as a close syllable since close syllables are defined by Cox and Mannell (2009) and Roach (2002) as syllables that have at least one final consonant. These syllable structures can be illustrated with CV ba (father), and CVC bang (state). However, the frequency of the open syllable CV structure is much higher than that of the closed syllable structure CVC since as in Thai, there are only six syllable-final consonants (/p/, /t/, /k/, /n/, /ng/, and /m/) in Vietnamese (Mok, 2007; Ngo, 2006), of which the first five consonants are shared with Chinese (Zhang, 1996), compared to 54 syllable-final consonants in English (Tang, 2007).

In contrast, the Vietnamese language has 14 vowels and 27 diphthongs and triphthongs, whereas English has 20 vowels and only 5 diphthongs (Roach, 2002). Tang (2007) stated “[t]he English and Vietnamese languages share seven mono-vowels” (p. 7), while the vowel /əl/, listed as unshared by Tang, is considered to be a shared vowel by Ngo (2006) and Dang (1998). The latter also added to the shared list four diphthongs in English, called principal vowels in combination with final semi-vowels /u/ and /u/ in Vietnamese. (See Figure 2 and Figure 3 below).
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

The following Figure illustrates the Vietnamese vowels which are shared or not shared between the two languages.

**Figure 3.** Vietnamese vowels shared and unshared by the English language. (Please, refer to the explanation of these phonemic transcript signs to Table 2. P. 19 described by Dang (2008).)
A hypothesis arising from the differences of the segmental elements between the two languages is that Vietnamese adult EFL/ESL learners might use the Vietnamese open syllable CV to produce the English closed syllable CVC, which makes it hard for interlocutors to recognize the target words. In English, the presence of a coda in a CVC syllable is contrastive to a CV syllable when the two structures share the same vowel. For instance, say /seɪ/ and he /hi/ are different from sale /seɪl/ and heal /hel/ respectively because of the phoneme /l/. In other words, they all convey different meanings. For Vietnamese adult EFL/ESL learners, because the final /l/ does not exist in the Vietnamese closed syllable CVC, sale /seɪl/ and heal /hel/ sounds are heard to be similar to [seɪ] and [hi]. Substituting the closed syllable CVC with the open syllable CV might be caused by the unshared vowels and unshared syllable final consonants. In particular, the open syllable CV is frequently applied to produce the English CVL. A previous study by Dang (2006) shows that CVL (in which L is the lateral consonant) is often converted into various forms of open syllables with a CV structure. For instance, hill or heal are produced as hie/hieu; sell or sail as seɪ; smile/mile as smai/mai.

Another hypothesis is that the Vietnamese open syllable CV structure might be more frequently used to pronounce the English CVC in polysyllabic words associated with a sequence of CVC.VC.VC than in monosyllabic words, probably making prosody strange to listeners. In English syllable structures, it is widely accepted on the basis of the maximum codas principle that “a syllable does not end with a short vowel” (Roach, 2002, p. 47). Therefore, for instance, botany is separated into three syllables by a hyphen as follows: bot-an-i, which coincides with the bot.an.i in Webster’s New Word Dictionary in which the dot (.) is a syllable boundary. However, based on the maximum onset principle many linguists suggest that phonemes /t/ and /n/ probably belong to the second syllable and third syllable respectively. This is in concordance with Roach’s view (2002) that, “[i]n English, consonants
have been analyzed as acting simultaneously as the coda of one syllable and the onset of the following syllable, as in 'bellow' bel-low, a phenomenon known as ambisyllabicity” (p. 49).

It is for this reason that linguists have come up with a new term for this phoneme, which is ‘ambi-syllabic’ (Roach, 2002). The term is likely to account for the connected sounds in polysyllabic words in English because the final syllabic consonants are treated as initial ones of the following syllables. Thus, botany is linked as /botani/. In contrast, as in Thai, all the final consonants (including /n/ and /t/ in botany) of the Vietnamese language are unreleased with no audible explosion (Doan, 1999; Mok, 2007). This view is also shared by Perez and Carty (2004), who suggested “[f]inal consonants are not released in Vietnamese. Thus, Vietnamese students tend to drop English final consonant sounds” (p. 204), as exemplified by: 

\[\text{xem ò-tô /sem ź o.to/} \text{ (to look at automobiles)} \text{ versus xe mô-tô /se ź mo.to/} \text{ (motomobiles).}\]

According to Nguyen (1987), such a contrast is explained by the fact that in this pair, the final nasal sound /m/ (as in xem) is unreleased whereas the initial /m/ (as in mô) is explosive, and so, the /t/ and /n/ as in botany cannot be linked to the following vowel. Instead, they are considered as the initial consonants of the second syllable and the third syllable respectively. In other words, the two initial syllables of botany could become open syllables. Therefore, based on the Vietnamese open syllable CV, botany might be produced as bo/ ta/ni clearly and separately syllable by syllable without connected syllables. Such a pronunciation habit is more likely to happen to polysyllabic words which are made up of closed syllables with final consonants unshared by the Vietnamese.

This is underpinned by Nakishima (2006), who suggested “[a]llmost all English closed syllables are pronounced as open syllables by Japanese English speakers since there are a very limited number of consonants in final syllabic position” (p. 9). Roach (2002) also stated “[a]nalysing the function and distribution of tones in a tone language would be mainly occupied in examining utterances syllable by syllable” (p. 277). So, on the basis of the
Vietnamese CV, the word military might be produced as \(\text{mi/ li/te/ri}\) clearly and separately syllable by syllable without connected syllables. The Vietnamese CV might also be applied to produce the English CVC in which V is a shared diphthong and C is a shared final consonant. This is because the shared diphthongs, such as /ai/, /au/ etc. (see Figure 3), never end with a final consonant in Vietnamese (Dang 2006; Hoang, 2008). Thus, ‘fine’ might be produced as /\text{fai/}\) by Vietnamese adult speakers in spite of the existence of the final nasal alveolar /n/ in Vietnamese.

One more hypothesis arising from the difference of syllable structures between English and Vietnamese is that the Vietnamese CV might be applied to pronounce the English CCV because the CCV does not exist in the Vietnamese language except for /\text{tr}/ (Dang 2006). For instance, ‘create’ might be pronounced as [\text{rete}] or [\text{keate}].

The literature so far considered suggests that the dissimilarities of CVC syllable structure probably lead to Vietnamese adult EFL/ESL learners’ English mispronunciation. It is a rule in the Vietnamese language that the final velar consonant /\text{k/} agrees with a preceding single vowel and unshared preceding diphthongs or triphthongs as displayed in Figure 3. In other words, the shared vowels in Figure 3 such as /\text{ au/}, /\text{au/}, /\text{a/}\) etc are never followed by the voiceless velar /\text{k/} in the Vietnamese language (Dang, 2006: Hoang, 2008). This could account for the omission of this final sound undertaken by Vietnamese adult EFL learners, as Nguyen (2007) found that hike and like were wrongly pronounced as high and lie in their studies. Exceptionally, the preceding closing diphthong /\text{e/}\) sounds like front vowel /\text{e/}\) in the Vietnamese language. It is supported by Doan (1999), who stated that the velar /\text{k/} very often agrees with the preceding front vowels such as /\text{i/}, /\text{e/}\) and /\text{e/}.

On the other hand, most Vietnamese speakers tend to replace the final stop /\text{t/}\) by the final consonant /\text{k/}\) in pronouncing Vietnamese words ending with /\text{t/}\) (Dang, 2008). This is also supported by Le (2008), who claimed that many university students had problems with
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spelling final letter c and t, which was mainly brought about by their pronunciation. For instance, the minimal pairs: mặ and mất, các and cá and cát are often produced as /mak/ and /kak/ Therefore, it is justified to assume that Vietnamese adult EFL learners might apply CVK plus a tone (in which the K represents the consonant /k/) to produce the CVC or CVCC in English in which the final C represents consonants such as /t/, /d/, /s/ and the consonant cluster /st/ because they are alveolar consonants which share the same place of articulation. For instance, at and practice might be produced as /aek/ and /'praes tiks/, and the words test and text might be similarly produced as /tæk/ or /kækt/ /teskt/. This might also occur to words with the CVth structure since the letter ‘th’ might be mistakenly considered as /t/ also alveolar-palatal in Vietnamese (Tran, 2010, p. 30). For example, the word with might be articulated as /wik’t/. In addition, the Vietnamese CVN plus a tone might be applied to produce the English CVL since the Vietnamese syllable structure does not include the final lateral consonant /l/ (Dang, 2006). For instance, school might be produced as [skun].

The following Table 4 summarises the points stated above:

**Table 4**

*Vietnamese CVC structure and its reflection on English pronunciation of Vietnamese speakers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese CVC</th>
<th>English CVC</th>
<th>Vietnamese adult EFL Learners’ English pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CVN (as in cùn (blunt) /kuːn/)</td>
<td>CVL (as in School /skuːl/)</td>
<td>Sku:n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVK (as in các (various) /kaːk/)</td>
<td>CVT, (as in cat /kaet/)</td>
<td>/kaek/ or /kaekt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CVST (as in test /test/)</td>
<td>/teskt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CVD (as in need /niːd/)</td>
<td>/niːk/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CVS (as in practice) /ˈpraek tɪs/)</th>
<th>/ˈpraektɪks/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CVTh (as in breath) /breθ/</td>
<td>/brekt/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3. INTELLIGIBILITY

3.1 Definition of intelligibility

Few teachers would claim today that pronunciation that is indistinguishable from that of a native speaker is their goal for their learners. Since the recognition of English as an International Language as spoken by many millions of people who are non-native English speakers, it is widely believed that intelligibility is the most sensible and achievable pedagogic goal in foreign or second language instruction. What then is intelligibility? There is no universally agreed upon definition of this term. However, some common conceptualizations are recognized as follows: Smith (1992) defined it as the capability of word recognition. He contrasted intelligibility with two other words: comprehensibility and interpretability. Comprehensibility denotes the understanding of the literal meaning, similar to Austin’s (1962) concept of locutionary force. By comparison, interpretability refers to the grasping of the intended meaning underlying given utterances, equivalent to Austin’s (1962) illocutionary force.

Kenworthy (1997) claimed that “[i]ntelligibility is being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation” (p. 13). He further stated that this was the same as understandability. To illustrate this, he stated, “the more words a listener is able to identify accurately when said by a particular speaker, the more intelligible that speaker is” (Kenworthy, 1997, p. 13). Munro, Derwing, and Morton (2006) defined intelligibility “as the extent to which a speaker’s utterance is actually understood and emphasized the importance of distinguishing this notion from comprehensibility, which refers to the listener’s estimation of difficulty in understanding
an utterance” (p. 2). They elucidated the importance of the distinction between intelligibility and comprehensibility because “two utterances that are fully intelligible might entail perceptibly distinct degrees of processing difficulty, such that they are rated differently for comprehensibility” (Munro, Derwing, Morton, 2006, p. 14).

Zielinski (2006) suggested that intelligibility involves the speaker and the listeners, and therefore defined intelligibility as the extent to which the speech signal produced by the speaker can be identified by the listener as the words the speaker intended to construct (Zielinski, 2006, p. 23). This definition concords with Field’s view (2005, p. 401), “the extent to which the acoustic-phonetic content of the message is recognizable by a listener.” (as cited by Zielinski, 2006, p. 23).

Recently, there have been some investigations into English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which has been used in ASEAN (The Association of South-East Asian Nations). This term is characterised by a variety of pronunciations, as people from different language backgrounds speak English together. A more precise definition has been provided by Firth as follows:

A lingua franca is a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth 1996, p. 240 as cited in Kirkpatrick, 2009, p. 2).

International intelligibility has also been investigated on the basis of ELF particularly in the ASEAN settings (e.g, Deterding, 2011; Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2010), providing essential data on intelligibility in ELF in the ASEAN countries. It is hoped that the present study will provide more data on ELF intelligibility for teaching of English in Vietnam in particular and in ASEAN in general.
3.2 Studies on second language intelligibility, English as an international language and intelligibility undertaken in Vietnam

In the context of English as a global language, English is being spoken among more and more non-native speakers of English. Attaining native-like pronunciation seems to be impractical, then, for adult ESL/EFL learners. The Critical Period Hypothesis proposed by Eric Lenneberg in 1967 attempted to find an explanation of why adult learners have a foreign sounding accent in their L2 and said that the mastery of native-like pronunciation is impossible for adult L2 learners because they have already formed habits about how to produce certain sounds in their native language which then might interfere with the sounds of the new language. Lenneberg (1967) suggested that one’s second language must be acquired before puberty (about 12 years of age) in order to achieve native-like pronunciation.

Instead of a futile attempt to achieve native-like pronunciation that is affected not only by age but also by other factors, the new goal in language learning is intelligibility. Not surprisingly, various studies on ESL/EFL learners’ intelligibility has been conducted in recent years to assist teachers in enhancing their ESL/EFL learners’ pronunciation. For instance, research by Jenkins (2000) suggests that Japanese adult ESL learners speak English in a way that has a negative impact on their speech intelligibility. A study by Derwing and Rossiter (2002) expands on this idea and states that the way in which many speakers of English as a second language speak influences their speech intelligibility. Derwing and Rossiter surveyed 100 speakers of English as a second language and found that over half of the study participants felt that pronunciation contributed to their communication problems. Forty-two participants felt that pronunciation was the primary cause of their communication problems and 37 participants reported that they were often asked to repeat themselves.

ESL learners’ intelligibility was also the focus in a study conducted by Bent and Bradlow (2003), who measured their participants’ (speakers’) intelligibility on the basis of the number
of words which were accurately transcribed by listeners. Moreover, in their numerous studies on L2 utterances, Munro, Derwing, and Morton examined the impact of accents on both intelligibility and comprehensibility by asking the listeners to rate L2 utterances for comprehensibility as well as accentedness after dictation tasks (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 1995, 1999; Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). Their findings indicate that the three dimensions - accentedness, comprehensibility and intelligibility are although related not equivalent. Likewise, the study by Ingram and Nguyen (2007) embraced this view to rate Vietnamese adult learners’ ESL utterances for accent strength and intelligibility. They suggested that for practical purposes, measures of accent strength and intelligibility may be virtually indistinguishable dimensions.

In Vietnam, English has since recently been used in oral interactions not only between native English speakers and Vietnamese speakers but also between Vietnamese speakers and other non-native English speakers. However, Cunningham (2009) stated:

> The pronunciation of English presents severe challenges to Vietnamese-speaking learners. Not only is the sound system of Vietnamese very different from that of English, but there are also extremely limited opportunities for hearing and speaking English in Vietnam. In addition, there are limited resources available to teachers of English in Vietnam so teachers are likely to pass on their own English pronunciation to their students. (p. 1)

In such a context of English as an International Language (EIL), and with no studies in relation to syllable structure and intelligibility, it is essential to conduct an inquiry into how Vietnamese adult ESL learners’ mother tongue impacts on their English speech intelligibility in syllable structure.
3.3 How were studies of intelligibility conducted?

Measuring the intelligibility of EFL/ESL speakers is a crucial task for any research that investigates how non-native speakers are perceived and understood. The researcher can gather data on the non-native speakers’ language output in interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers, and also between non-native speakers in interaction with other non-native speakers. However, the main questions to be asked are who should measure the intelligibility of EFL/ESL learners? What methods are used for evaluating intelligibility? What aspects of intelligibility are measured? The responses to all of these questions will be presented in the following section.

3.3.1 Who measures intelligibility

Steeneken (2003) suggests that there are two principally different assessment methods that may be applied when measuring intelligibility:

a) Subjective assessment, based on the use of speakers and listeners; and

b) Objective assessment based on physical parameters of the transmission channel.

The former a) has been applied by linguists and researchers to measure adult L2 learners’ speech intelligibility, while the latter b) is also related to using software to measure L2 learners’ intelligibility associated with prosodic features.

3.3.1.1 Listeners as arbiters or pronunciation raters

Some researchers, such as Kachru (1992) and Ludwig (1982), as well as language instructors, suggest that non-native speakers’ English international intelligibility should be judged by native-speakers since they are best able to measure how English is spoken in a natural way and what is exactly comprehended. The assumption that native speakers are the sole arbiters of international intelligibility in the use of English is what Kachru (1992) termed “the interlocutor myth” (p.13). Kachru further claimed that English has functionally been taught
for interaction with native speakers of English, American, Australian or British and that this assumption has overlooked global interactions among two or more non-native speakers.

In the context of English as a global language, English is used in interactions between not only native speakers and non-native speakers but between two different language background non-native speakers as well. Therefore, the sole privilege of native speakers to judge non-native speech samples’ intelligibility has been changed. Nelson (1992) remarked that “non-native creativity, and indeed, diachronic changes of all sorts, are constantly judged in comparison to native models” (p. 336). Nakashima (2006) said in his study:

Bansal (1969) might be the first researcher in his study to investigate to what extent educated Indian speakers of English were intelligible to other educated nationalities; both native and non-native speakers were asked to repeat or write down the recorded words or sentences. His findings show that educated Indian speakers attained approximately 70 percent intelligibility to educated people from other countries. Moreover, Smith (1987) invited both native and non-native speakers to rate each other’s varieties of English. The non-native speech samples were recorded by speakers from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Taiwan, the UK, and the US. The listener groups included 10 Japanese learners of English, 10 native speakers of American English, and a mixed group consisting of one native and eight non-native speakers, each from a different country. (p.8)

Likewise, recently, Ingram and Nguyen (2007) examined how well L2 listeners can judge and successfully comprehend accented English produced by other L2 speakers. Non-native speech samples were recorded by speakers of different L1 backgrounds such as Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. The largest group of listeners was native speakers of Australian English from a monolingual home background. The second largest listener group comprised native or near life-time Australian residents where a language other than English
was used at home. The other listener groups of interest comprised overseas students resident in Australia for their current course of study. They have found that the amount of exposure to the target language and familiarity with the accent varieties facilitates the comprehension of native speakers’ speech.

Measuring intelligibility might be associated with some problems because bias is possible when the measurement of ESL/EFL learners’ intelligibility is dependent on listeners’ judgment. The reasons for this might be: the listener’s attitude towards the speakers’ accent, or the listeners’ phonetic ability, or others. Various studies in this area have indicated that intelligibility can be influenced by subjective factors such as the listeners’ linguistic proficiency, the listeners’ attitude towards foreign accents, familiarity, and age. Kenworthy (1997) suggested “[t]here were two listener factors that were very important; first the listeners’ familiarity with foreign accent and, second, the listeners’ ability to use contextual clues when listening” (p. 14).

In other words, besides other factors, the two listener factors (familiarity with the accents and the listeners’ proficiency) should be taken into account to determine who is the legitimate judge of EFL/ESL speakers’ intelligibility. These factors have been carefully taken into consideration in selection of the appropriate raters of pronunciation in this research study.

3.3.1.2  **Software as measurement for the quality of pronunciation raters**

ESL/EFL learners’ pronunciation can also be assessed by using technology. This software is mainly used to measure ESL/EFL learners' intelligibility with reference to prosodic features and it is used in studies conducted by Nora (2008). She analysed acoustically 208 non-native speakers’ (NNSs’) tokens and 16 native-speakers’ (NSs’) tokens through pitch tracks and spectrograms using the SFS/WASP (Speech Filing System/Waveforms, Annotations, Spectrogram and Pitch) Version 103 (2004) designed by Mark Huckvale from the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, University College, London. This was also used by
Timkova (2001), who dealt with pitch range produced by ten 2nd year university students of English whose mother tongue was Slovak, and one NS. The data collected were calculated in Hertz (Hz).

### 3.3.2 Methods to measure intelligibility

It is important to investigate what approaches are commonly used to measure ESL learners’ intelligibility. It has been widely accepted that there are several approaches to examine the relationships between utterances and intelligibility: dictation tasks, listening comprehension tests, and cloze tests, responses with pictures to speech stimuli, grammatical paraphrase tasks, recording, and truth value judgment.

Dictation tasks have been accepted to be one of the common approaches to evaluate L2 speakers’ verbal intelligibility with reference to segmental features. In these dictation tasks, listeners are asked to use standard orthography to write out the utterances they hear; the number of the words they correctly transcribed is regarded as an index of speech intelligibility. However, the disadvantage of this approach is that stressed words recognized as key words of an utterance can be missed in listeners’ transcriptions, in spite of all of the other words being transcribed accurately. This could lead to the missing of the main message of the utterance, indicating that this utterance would be unintelligible. This method has been found in the studies conducted by Bent and Bradlow (2003); Brodkey (1972); Burda, Scherz, Hagerman and Edwards (2003); Derwing & Munro (1997); Munro, Derwing and Morton (2006).

In addition, Munro et al. (2006) noted that other styles have also been employed by other scholars to explore non-native speakers’ intelligibility, including listening comprehension tests (Anderson-Hsieh & Koehler, 1988), cloze tests (Smith & Rafiqzad, 1979), responses with pictures to speech stimuli (Smith & Bisazza, 1982), truth value judgment (Munro & Derwing, 1995), and grammatical paraphrase task (Ingram & Nguyen 2007).
The choice as to which methods to employ depends on which aspect of the non-native speakers’ speech intelligibility is the focus. Some researchers (e.g. Water, 2002), employed speech stimuli for participants to identify words or utterances based on the assumption that non-native speakers’ intelligibility is significantly influenced by their confusion between voiced and voiceless sounds or short and long vowel sounds. For instance, focusing on the pronunciation of CVC words:

Waters (2002) only used four minimal pairs (cap/cab, pick/pig, pot/pod, beet-bead) to test word-recognition intelligibility. Because his findings indicate that American English listeners often cannot distinguish whether the word-final consonants of the test words spoken by non-native speakers (in this case, Japanese and Taiwanese) are voiced or voiceless, he concluded that, to enhance intelligibility, spoken English instruction should include the exercises of producing and distinguishing words with final voiced/voiceless stops. (as cited in James, 2006, p.12)

As discussed above, the judgment of ESL/EFL learners’ speech intelligibility associated with intonation can be based on technology. This method focuses on examining the differences between non-native speakers (NNSs) and native speakers (NSs) in the range between the highest and lowest pitch for the falling tones and/or the rising tones. A significant difference in range between NNSs and NSs is possible, but this does not seem to indicate that such a difference has a probable influence on their intelligibility. In other words, their speech can be intelligible in spite of a great range of falling tones and rising tones between NNSs and NSs. This approach is also found in the studies conducted by Derwing and Munro (1997); and Trofimovich and Baker (2006), in which speakers’ intelligibility is measured in suprasegmental aspects by removing most of the segmental information, while leaving prosodic features largely intact.
However, the effect of suprasegmental features on intelligibility remained inconclusive or in even some studies, non-existent. This can be established based on the findings of the studies on intonation (Munro & Derwing, 1995); prosody (Derwing & Munro, 1997); the recent studies on rhythm such as, Gut (2011); Hayes-Harb, Smith, Bent and Bradlow (2008); Ingram and Nguyen (2007); Jeon (2010); Major et al. (2002); Munro et al. (2006); and others considering the effect of word stress errors (Benrabah, 1997; Suenobu, Kanzaki, & Yamane, 1992), syllable stress errors (Zielinski, 2006) and incorrect pause insertion (Suenobu et al., 1992). None of these studies came to a significant conclusion although there was some support for the idea that both, word stress errors, syllable stress errors and incorrect pause insertion have the potential to affect intelligibility. Thus, an issue arising from this is the questionability of the methods.

In this research study, dictation tasks were also applied to identify utterances containing syllable structures. This is largely because potential errors will probably appear in the case of words which will be likely to be wrongly transcribed or missed out due to the application of the Vietnamese syllable structure in their English speech (see section 3.2.1.1 of Chapter three, p. 50 for more details). Vietnamese syllable structures are assumed to have an impact on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility. In the pronunciation test used in this study, selected from a piece of authentic spoken discourse from IELTS listening sources, syllable structures were measured on a number of words which were transcribed by the listeners.

3.4 Segmentals, suprasegmentals towards syllable structures and intelligibility

Investigations into the relationship between different aspects of speech production and intelligibility in L2 speakers have been conducted in a small number of studies. Cunningham (2009) suggested that the relationship between the roles of segmental and suprasegmental elements of English pronunciation for intelligibility was the subject of a lot of beliefs but a
few studies. However, different conclusions drawn from these few studies have given rise to various issues which are still controversial, requiring further studies in a search for more robust answers. In general, four main points have arisen from the studies and they are outlined in the following summary.

Firstly, the impact of suprasegmental features on intelligibility was inconclusive (Derwing and Munro, 1997; Munro and Derwing, 1995). Secondly, there are also a few studies conducted by the same authors, Derwing and Munro (1997), and Munro and Derwing (1995) that had investigated the relationship between intelligibility and the production of speech sounds (segmental features). These studies showed that there is no direct relationship between segmental features and intelligibility. As opposed to this, Jenkins (2000) and Suenobu et al. (1992) found that speech sound errors possibly affect intelligibility. On the other hand, in spite of no clear proof about this relationship, there is agreement among current proponents of the teachability of L2 pronunciation that suprasegmentals need to be explicitly taught (Anderson-Hsieh, Riney, and Koehler, 1994; Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler, 1992; Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996; Gilbert, 1995; McNerney and Mendelsohn, 1992; Morley, 1994). Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1992) believed “[s]uprasegmental errors have a more serious effect on intelligibility than segmental errors”, and state that this is because “prosody provides the framework for utterances and directs the listener’s attention to information the speaker regards as important” (p. 531). This view is also widely held among teachers and textbook writers (Burgess and Spencer, 2000).

To support this view, Nakashima (2006) re-analysed the phonological errors presented in Jenkins (2000) and his findings indicate how the knowledge of suprasegmentals, and particularly syllable structure can contribute to EFL Japanese learners’ satisfactory intelligibility. Nakashima challenged Jenkin’s position that most of intelligibility problems arise from segments, rather than prosody, by re-analysing Jenkin’s data collected from the
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learners (six learners of English, two Japanese, three Swiss-German, and one Swiss-French) during their pair-work interactions such as social conversation, information-exchange, and joint problem-solving tasks. The re-analysis showed that 75 percent of the Japanese data presented by Jenkins (2000, p. 14), by which she contends that the major source of communication breakdown is segmental, involved suprasegmental aspects, particularly syllable structures, raising a hypothesis for this study.

Likewise, there have also been few studies to investigate the relationship between Vietnamese adult learners’ pronunciation problems in various respects and their speech intelligibility. However, most studies of Vietnamese accents in English have been based in countries where English is a mainstream language, such as the USA and Australia. This research study focuses on an inquiry into the co-relationship between syllable features and Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility and the participants in this research were all learners who live and study in Vietnam.

3.5 Pronunciation instruction and its impact on intelligibility

The goal of pronunciation instruction in Vietnamese tertiary education is still to achieve a native-like accent. University students of English are introduced to ‘man-made’ native-speaker models of English pronunciation, notably Northern American and southern-educated British based on the textbooks such as Interchange, Person To Person, or Headway including CDs or tapes with recordings of native-American English speakers’ and British speakers’ speech respectively. However, in the context where English is used as an international language in almost all fields throughout Vietnam, such as education, politics, health care, or tourism, it is rational that intelligibility, rather than native-like pronunciation be set as a goal of ESL/EFL pronunciation instruction.

The question posed in this study is what pronunciation elements should be taught and studied to attain the goal of intelligible pronunciation in this changed economic and educational
context of Vietnam. Segmentals are the basic inventory of distinctive sounds and the way that they combine to form a spoken language, indicating that pronunciation instruction in second language classrooms with foci on this inventory is crucial. In the case of British English, the segmentals consist of 40 phonemes: 20 vowels and 24 consonants. The students are often instructed through discrimination and production of target sounds via drills consisting of minimal pairs like sheep or ship, bad or bed. In spite of the merits of segmental instruction in ESL/EFL pronunciation, the mastery of segmentals is insufficient to attain intelligibility without additional acquisition of syllable structures and other suprasegmental features in the classroom as they provide crucial context and support (i.e. they determine meaning) segmental production. Therefore they should assume a more prominent place in pronunciation instruction (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Gilbert, 1990; Morley, 1991). It can be argued that if adult EFL/ESL learners have problems with syllables and other suprasegmental elements, this will probably affect not only their speaking skills, but also their comprehension of native speakers. Although in recent years, new materials or textbooks that emphasize prosodic factors, such as New Interchange, New Person to Person, and New Headway have been developed, and despite the fact that some instructors are aware of the need for suprasegmental instruction (Breitkreutz et al., 2001), many aspects of current pronunciation instruction, derive from speech pathology, with a strong focus on segmentals.

The view in favour of pronunciation associated with suprasegmentals alongside segmentals is supported by Wong (1993) suggesting that the most relevant features of pronunciation - stress, rhythm, adjustments/reductions, logical stress, and intonation - play a greater role in English communication than the individual sounds themselves. In other words, teaching speech from the perspective of suprasegmentals seems indispensable for the purpose of achieving intelligible communication. The stance now popularly shared is that focusing on
individual vowel and consonant sounds is only the first step in learning to speak and understand English.

In the social context of Vietnam, it is essential to introduce syllable structures and other suprasegmental features as a main part of pronunciation instruction, besides the segmental elements that are usually taught in the classroom. This is also of great concern to the English lecturers from the English Department of Hanoi National University. Evidence for this concern has been found in Ha’s study (2005) on the teaching of segmental which states “[w]e request that all teachers of the English department pay more attention to students’ pronunciation of segmentals and try to correct them any time possible” (p. 10). Moreover, anecdotal evidence shows that even those who are trained to be teachers of English in Vietnam are almost never aware of syllable structures and other suprasegmental features due to the fact that pronunciation instruction does not seem to cover these elements (Dang, 2004). Therefore, this study will look at what pronunciation aspects are taught and how they should be taught and learnt in the classrooms in Vietnam in the hope of shaping future instruction and the enhancement of the English pronunciation of Vietnamese students.

In sum, this literature review suggests that there have been no studies on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ intelligibility and their L1 transfer with a specific reference to syllable structures. The literature review has also revealed that no significant conclusions have been made from the previous studies in this field. In addition, the review has suggested that English pronunciation instruction seems to overlook syllable structures and other suprasegmental features, which play a very important role in oral communication. All of this indicates that there is a need for further studies in order to close this knowledge gap.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology that guided the investigation. The chapter commences with the presentation of the theoretical framework that underpinned the research which is then followed by the interpretation of the underlying philosophical approach. In the following, the chapter also outlines the principles of the research design and discusses the reliability, validity, limitations and implications of the research procedures.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this thesis, a theoretical framework has been developed prompted by previous studies’ findings (e.g. Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Ioup & Weimberger, 1987; Munro & Derwing, 1995; Odlin, 1989; Purcell & Suter, 1980; Van-Pattern, 1998), but particularly by Nakashima’s (2006) findings. In his study, he reanalyzed the Japanese adult EFL data as presented by Jenkin (2000), which showed that most of the Japanese learner errors involved syllable structure errors caused by interference with their (Japanese) first language. English pronunciation has not been explicitly taught in Vietnamese educational institutions, therefore Vietnamese adult EFL learners do not gain any knowledge of English pronunciation, particularly about syllable structure. Thus, the application of their L1 pronunciation habits (in terms of syllable structures) to their English pronunciation is probably the cause for Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ low speech intelligibility.

Based on the current practices in pronunciation instruction, a comparison, and contrasting of the syllable features of the two languages, English and Vietnamese, and insights gained from reviewing the existing literature, the following theoretical framework has been designed.
Figure 4. The negative transfer from the first language (Vietnamese syllable structure) to the second language (English syllable structure) reduces the L2 speaker intelligibility.

2. THE PHILOSOPHY THAT GUIDES THIS RESEARCH

This research is influenced by two major philosophical ideas: objectivism and subjectivism. According to objectivists, knowledge of the world or truth exists outside the knower and therefore researchers can come to know the world as it really is. In other words, the purpose of researchers is to uncover ‘social facts’ which make up our world (Durkhem, 1964). Subjectivists, on the other hand, believe that the truth depends on individuals. This is expounded by Pratt (1998), who claims “[k]nowledge and truth is dependent upon what individuals bring to the moment of perception” (p. 4).

In this study, the research problem identified is that Vietnamese adult EFL learners have serious pronunciation problems which might be brought about by their first language, making their speech unintelligible. This idea is associated with an objectivist approach. It is a problem known as a reality, which exists out there and is waiting to be discovered. Uncovering the ‘social facts’ which make up our world can be realized by finding responses to the main research question: “How does the native language affect Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility at syllable level?” By doing this, the researcher will attempt to uncover the ‘social facts’ about the reasons why Vietnamese struggle with understanding English and
being understood. The follow-up sub-questions such as: Is the investigated cohort of students’ speech unintelligible? How does syllable structure affect their intelligibility?, seek for finer details and the responses to these sub-questions rely on individuals or organizations who have faced the problem and had experiences of it. This reflects a subjectivist stance. In this study, the research questions, “Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?” and “What are the pedagogic implications of the findings?”, can be investigated by collecting data from participants comprising a group of four English lecturers and their students associated with their teaching and learning activities in the classroom since they are the subjects who face this problem and have experiences related to it.

By choosing to adopt standpoints of both objectivism and subjectivism, this research study has taken a pragmatic approach (Peire, James, Mead and Dewey (as cited in Cherryholmes, 1994.) In accordance with Creswell (2009)“ the researcher is free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet his needs and purposes.” (p. 562), a mixed research methods approach was utilized in which the researcher drew liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions, data gathering techniques, and interpretations.

3. THE EXPLANATORY MIXED METHODS DESIGN

The explanatory mixed methods design is a two-phase model developed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), which “consists of two data collection techniques: first quantitative data should be collected and then qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results” (as cited in Creswell, 2008, p. 560). The rationale for this approach is that quantitative data and results will provide the general, or the broad picture of the research problem, whereas qualitative data will allow for an in-depth analysis in order to refine, extend, or explain the general picture, and gain more details that might make it possible to draw conclusions concerning the pedagogic implications of the findings. In addition, in the search
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for trustworthy and valid findings, the gained data from the questionnaires, lecturer and student interviews, and observations will be triangulated.

3.1 Participants

3.1.1 University students

The researcher has to decide on what target population or unit of analysis the data needs to be gathered. Creswell (2009) defines the target population as “a group of individuals (or a group of organizations) with some common defining characteristics”. Deciding to collect data from multiple units of analysis or a single level depends on the hypotheses and questions that the researcher seeks to answer (Creswell, 2008). For the first four survey questions, this study involved collecting data from one target population or unit (50 university students in Vietnam) via a pronunciation test and a questionnaire. Another unit (university lecturers) was used for the qualitative interviews.

This study is a co-relational study. Ideally, the researcher selects individuals to generate results to the population, so the target group needs to be of adequate size for the use of correlation statistics, such as N= 15, 30 as “larger sizes contribute to less error variance and better claims of representativeness” (Creswell, 2008, p. 370). Thus, participant selection in the present study was based on this view. The target group consisted of 50 first-year education students with ages ranging from 19 to 21 from the English Department of a university in Vietnam, who had spent seven years learning English at high school (year 6 to year 12), and had been taught English for a full semester at university. This was considered as a convenience sample because this researcher was a lecturer at that university and was able to select would-be participants who were willing and available for the study with the permission of the Dean and the researcher’s colleagues. It was impossible, however, for the researcher to get an equal number of male and female students since females usually outnumber males in teacher education.
The total number of the first year students who were majoring in English in the time of this investigation was over 300, and they were divided into five classes. They were already initially better at English than those who were majoring in other subjects at their university and in other universities as well, because they were chosen from thousands of candidates via an admission/entry examination based on English, Vietnamese essay and mathematics in which English was considered more important than the other subjects. At other departments and other universities, however, English was not a key subject for competitive entry examinations. The curriculum for year 1 English for this program covers the instruction of the four macro-skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) plus grammar and phonetics. Importantly, the sample for this research was decided on the basis of sample size and the confidence interval with the idea that “larger samples yield narrower confidence intervals” (Cooksey, 2007, p. 356). In this study, the confidence interval is 1/6 (50/300) from the target population (300). In other words, a random sample gives each student a 1 in 6 chance in the study or a probability of selection of 0.166 Such a probability sample meets precision requirements (Berends, 2004). Therefore, it could be said that this sample could provide significant information for answering the set research questions and support the hypotheses.

3.1.2 Interviewees

This study also collected data from four separate interviews with four Vietnamese lecturers of English and ten independent interviews with different volunteer students from the investigated cohort of the 50 participants. The two data sets were compared to examine the reasons why Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility is so low? The data were analysed on the basis of subjectivist viewpoints that reality is what each person interprets it to be, that researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data and that inquiry changes both the researcher and the subjects (Coll & Chapman 2000; Cousins 2002). The selection of the participants (lecturers) was guided by the criterion that three of the four interviewees taught
pronunciation. At Vietnamese universities it is very often the case that those who teach first year students are the best English Department graduates who have spent three years as teaching assistants. The fourth interviewee was a team leader, who had over nine year experience in teaching English at the university where this study was conducted. These instructors taught according to a rotational system, so that they conducted tutorials in all the five classes with 300 first-year students. All these circumstances qualified the four tutors as appropriate participants for the interviews since they had potential insights into the reasons why their students have pronunciation problems, what pronunciation aspects have been taught and how they have been taught at the English Department.

For the interviews with students, ten volunteers were chosen from the identified cohort to take part in independent interviews. It was hoped that this would make the gained data more reliable and trustworthy. As discussed above, these interviewees were students with seven years experience in learning English at secondary school level, (year 6 to year 12), and who had been studying to become teachers of English for a full semester. Therefore, they were considered as the right participants for the interviews because they were able to provide the researcher with crucial information related to the research question - Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?

3.1.3 Ten intelligibility raters

There were ten intelligibility raters chosen in order to minimize data bias. Following are the reasons for this selection.

Bias is possible when the measurement of ESL/EFL learners’ intelligibility is based on listeners’ judgement. Various studies on this topic have indicated that intelligibility can be influenced by a range of subjective factors such as the listener’s linguistic proficiency, the listeners’ attitude towards foreign accents, familiarity and age. Kenworthy (1997) suggested that there were two listener factors that were very important; first the listener’s familiarity
with the respective foreign accent and, second, the listener’s ability to use contextual clues when listening. Pihko (1997) observed that non-native speakers’ listening comprehension of different English varieties correlates significantly with their general language proficiency. In addition, Smith’s (1992) findings revealed that the more familiar listeners (native and non-native alike) were with other varieties of English, the better they could understand the speakers of such English varieties. This is supported by Ingram and Nguyen (2007) who showed that “[t]he amount of exposure to the target language and familiarity with the accent varieties facilitates the comprehension of native speakers’ speech” (p. 7).

A group of ten intelligibility raters (listeners) of different first language backgrounds (five native speakers and five non-native speakers) were chosen after considering the two listener factors as mentioned above to rate the 50 participating Vietnamese adult EFL speakers’ English speech intelligibility. That is, they were all raters who had no contact or had seldom contact with Vietnamese accented speakers, and they possessed a very high level of English language proficiency. According to these basic criteria, the five non-native speakers were selected from a list of the researcher’s colleagues, who all had qualifications at Masters level in Applied Linguistics or TESOL, and came from various countries with some years’ experience in teaching English. Three of them were Iranian, Chinese and Indian-Singaporean educated ESL teachers. The other two non-native listeners were an Iraqi – English interpreter and a Dutch IT programmer, who had also agreed to act as raters. Both of them had worked in Australia for over ten years. The former had been educated in Iraq before migrating to Australia, while the latter had received an Australian education since moving with his family to Australia at the age of 14. Therefore, all of the non-native English raters were fluent and at a native-like English proficiency level in English speaking and listening skills.

The selection of the five native speakers was also made based on the researcher’s communications with raters because such communications told the researcher whether or not
potential raters were friendly and how frequently they had contact with Vietnamese-accented English speakers. It was important that the recruitment process identified any potential bias that might be caused by the ‘listeners’ attitude to foreign accents’. This is important because native (L1) listeners frequently have a negative attitude towards foreign-accented speakers and are known to be highly sensitive to ‘foreignness’ in speech (e.g., Munro et al., 2006). The characteristics of the ten raters are summarized in Table 2 of Appendix 3, p. 149.

3.2 Research instruments and procedures

The research procedures were undertaken through the following research instruments: a pronunciation test, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. They are all presented in turn in the following sections.

Table 5 outlines the research procedures that were undertaken and the timetable of the research process.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration (two years)</th>
<th>Pronunciation test data (phase 1)</th>
<th>Questionnaire Data (phase 1)</th>
<th>Data from Interviews with lecturers (phase 2)</th>
<th>Data from Interviews with students (phase 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excel/SPSS</td>
<td>Excel/SPSS</td>
<td>Themes/categories</td>
<td>Themes/categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graph distribution, Mean, SD, t-test, Percentage, covariance, scatterplot and ONE-WAY–ANOVA</td>
<td>Table, Graph distribution, Percentage</td>
<td>DA analysis and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar for exploring meanings of messages</td>
<td>Tables designed according to themes and major relevant issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection and data analysis: One year</td>
<td>Writing articles, the thesis one year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Writing articles, the thesis one year | | | | |
3.2.1 Data collection process

3.2.1.1 Pronunciation test

The purpose of the pronunciation test is to collect raw data regarding the participants’ pronunciation competence. In this study, a pronunciation test was used. The test was designed by selecting a piece of a talk (formatted in a reading text) from one of the Australian IELTS listening sources, and then recording students as they read the text aloud, in which the vocabulary was not unfamiliar to the participants. Each of the 50 Vietnamese adult EFL students had to read aloud this text of 312 words. All the 50 students took part in the pronunciation test. The tape-recordings were independently carried out for a group of five students in the classroom at a time, at the planned date, specific time and place using a USB recorder, which had been carefully checked by the researcher in terms of sound quality, battery and trial recordings. In each test, every informant in the group was asked to read aloud the English text in front of the researcher at the front of the classroom while the others were waiting at the back in silence. The distance was far away enough to prevent the last reader from hearing what the first four ones were reading. Because each recording lasted three minutes or more, the maximum time for the five recordings took about 30 minutes including preparation time, making the last person not feel bored and tired so that data bias could be avoided. As a result, the quality of the recordings was in general good.

The ten raters then listened to the 50 recordings and wrote down the words they heard. The students’ pronunciation performance was measured based on the number of words the raters found intelligible and could transcribe after listening three times to the whole talk. As such, it was a dictation task for the ten raters (who were divided into two groups – one group consisting of five native-English speakers and the other group including five non-native English speakers) as they identified the utterances made by the students.
The 50 informants’ pronunciation performance was then measured in terms of syllable structures. Table 6 below represents the words that might cause problems for the Vietnamese learners if the assumption was true that they apply their native speaker habits to the pronunciation of words.

Table 6

*The test words in which errors are expected to emerge from the words incorrectly transcribed or missed out by the listeners probably as a result of the application of Vietnamese syllable CV structure in the pronunciation test performed by 50 informants. (Code: CV = consonant + vowel; CVn = consonant + vowel + ending on n, CVl = consonant + vowel + ending with l, CVk = consonant + vowel + ending with k, CVC = consonant + vowel + consonant, and CCV = consonant + consonant + vowel.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese syllable structures probably applied</th>
<th>119 words in the pronunciation test might be pronounced incorrectly by the 50 Vietnamese adult EFL students because the Vietnamese syllable structures might be applied to pronounce these words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese CV or CVn applied to English CVl (23 words)</td>
<td>all, material, fail, well-below, all, little, results, skill, all, all, pulse, also, controlled, we’ll, well, you’ll, still, tell, all, will, will, feeling, calmly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese CVk applied (30 words)</td>
<td>Good, yet, had, passed, put, stress, stress, test, stress, sweaty, shortness, breath, stressful, breathing, practice, stress, need, read, stress, need, best, reports, had, need, need, good, grades, research, should, stressful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese CV applied to English CVC (8 words)</td>
<td>Mind, around, down, time, time, known, known. Likewise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese CV applied to English CCV (11 words)</td>
<td>front, frame, pressure, increased, flying, problem, prepared, placed, played, through, stand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese CV applied to English multi-syllabic words (47 words)</td>
<td>understanding, purposes, assess, colours, exams, expectations, underestimate, importance, performance, exam, comfortable, exam, organized, exams, effect, academic, ability, recognize, affect, physically, experienced, underarms, situation, effective,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
physiological, reactions, psychologically, affects, exam, confident, panic, rely, rationally, particularly, rationally, rationally, circumstances, allocate, ridiculously, overestimated, underestimated, allocate, different, different, generally, attend, achieve

3.2.1.2 Questionnaire

In order to determine the contents of the questionnaire, hypotheses, key constructs and variables need to be identified. In this study, the purpose of the questionnaire was to collect data in a search for the reasons why the participants (50 Vietnamese adult EFL students) have made many pronunciation errors in the pronunciation test, reducing their speech intelligibility. Previous studies in this field have been conducted in different social-cultural contexts and found that factors such as mother tongue, age, gender, attitude and identity, motivation, amount of exposure, learners’ background and phonetic aptitude (Kenworthy 1998; Mohammad, 2008) affected their speech intelligibility. However, this questionnaire did not cover all the factors identified in the literature. It focused primarily on the impact of the mother tongue on the intelligibility of the students’ language output. Alternatively, it aimed at justifying an assumption and a hypothesis as follows:

- Students have not been taught pronunciation in the classroom and therefore they have not gained awareness of phonology, making their pronunciation unintelligible.
- The more English practice and oral communication has been taught in classroom, the fewer errors are made in speech production.

Thus, the purpose of the survey was to show possible correlations between the learners’ English pronunciation learning background, amount of exposure and pronunciation achievement. These three key constructs were defined as three variables, so the questions were asked around the first two variables in correlation with the third variable, which was pronunciation errors (from pronunciation test). For instance, the following two main
questions from the first key construct, “Was English pronunciation previously taught for the past seven years?”, and “Which of following English pronunciation elements was taught?” (for those who answered ‘yes’ to the former), reflect the assumption just mentioned above. See the full questionnaire in Appendix 4, p. 151 for more details.

3.2.1.3 Interviews

In this research, four separate in-depth interviews were conducted with four different lecturers of English after the completion of the pronunciation test and the questionnaire by the students. These were then followed by ten independent interviews with ten volunteer students selected from the 50 participants. The aim of these two sources of the interviews was to gain more rich data for triangulation purposes and enhancement of the validity of the findings gained from the questionnaire data. It was hoped that the interviews would reveal more potential factors as well as causes involved in the research problem and reveal what pronunciation aspects were taught and learnt in the tertiary classrooms.

Two or three meetings were held between the researcher and each interviewee to familiarize them with the research project and research questions. During the meetings, every would-be interviewee was asked to read with care the description of the research project and specifically, the interview questions that would guide the interviews with them. Time was then allocated for responding to all the questions of the potential interviewees in order to clarify whatever they were confused with. Moreover, the instruction was discussed both in English and Vietnamese to make sure that the interviewees understood what the focus of the guided interviews was. This was necessary to ensure the focus of the interview was maintained and sufficient rich data were collected.

3.2.1.3.1 Preparation of interviews

It can be said that the preparation of the interviews for this research was a crucial step because it directly affected the success of data collection. In this study, the preparation of the
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interviews involved selecting sampling (who would participate in these interviews), decisions about what data would be prioritized (shown via an interview protocol), what types of interviews would be conducted and where the interviews were to happen in order to limit potential bias.

### 3.2.1.3.1.1 Interview protocol for teachers

Designing an interview protocol is of a great significance. Creswell (2008) suggested, that “[a]n interview protocol serves the purpose of reminding the researcher of the questions and it provides a means for recording notes” (p.233). The interview protocol for this research consisted of five questions in the following order. The first question served as an icebreaker, encouraging the interviewee to talk more. The second question was posed to confirm whether the factors identified in the questionnaire had a co-relationship with the pronunciation outcome or not. The third question came from the assumption that there could have been some difficulties which teachers had had in enhancing pronunciation. The fourth question was included in the hope that the researcher might be able to gain more data on the participants’ experiences and problems with teaching pronunciation. The last question explored what pronunciation elements were being taught and how they were taught in the classroom. The interview was conducted face-to-face in a semi structured manner and the following questions were asked:

1. Could you tell me something about yourself? (E.g. Your occupation, your institution, your role,……)
2. What do you think about why university students who major in English have difficulties in oral communication with foreigners?
3. What are the difficulties you have faced in teaching pronunciation?
4. How did you address these problems?
5. What aspects of pronunciation have you explicitly taught in the classroom to enhance the Vietnamese adult EFL learner’s speech intelligibility?

3.2.1.3.1.2 Interview protocol for students

The aim of the ten independent interviews of students was to gain more rich qualitative data that might refine the findings that emerged from the questionnaire and the teachers’ interviews. To this end, the major questions of the interview protocol were related to teaching and learning and practice of pronunciation, and generated answers to the research question, “Why do the students make so many pronunciation errors?” The following were the protocol questions asked in the interviews:

1. What was the main goal of English learning program at high school?
2. Could you tell me what pronunciation you have learned and how it was taught and learnt at secondary school? And how are you currently taught about pronunciation?
3. Could you tell me about your chance to use your English in verbal communication or practice in your classroom and outside class?
4. How are your pronunciation skills improved?

Although the different questions for every group were asked, they were expected to provide data on the key constructs such as students’ pronunciation learning background and amount of exposure. The dataset from these sources were to answer the same research question, “Why do Vietnamese students make many pronunciation errors?.

3.2.1.3.2 Conducting the interview

A quiet and suitable location for conducting the interviews was selected. In agreement with the literature we believe that the respondents’ answers represent their interiors’ (knowledges, motives and meanings) or give valid descriptions of exteriors’ (Silverman, 1993). The researcher believes together with Silverman (2004) that in an interview, an interviewer talks less but an interviewee talks more. During the interviews, probes were used to obtain
additional information in case some points in the interview needed to be clarified or expanded on by the interviewees.

3.2.1.3.3 **Tape transcription**

3.2.1.3.3.1 **Transcripts of teachers’ interviews**

The interviews were taped and transcribed. Previously consent was sought from the interview subjects to record their contribution. In addition to listening to the interview with foci on the interviewees’ intonation, in this study, heavy stress (loudness), overlap and turn-taking, and long pauses were included in transcription since these features imply what the subject wanted to convey. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees for verification. Suggestions for corrections if necessary were welcomed in order to make sure that the data are exact.

3.2.1.3.3.2 **Transcripts of students’ interviews**

The interviews conducted in Vietnamese were translated carefully into English as turn-taking conversations, which made it easy and convenient for the researcher to analyze the data using Discourse Analysis (DA) and turn-taking (see section 3.2.2.3, p. 56 for more details).

3.2.2 **Data analysis process**

3.2.2.1 **Pronunciation test data analysis**

The pronunciation performance of the 50 participants measured by ten raters will be described in the following part of this section. The pronunciation test consisted of 17 sentences with a total number of 312 words. An assumption arising from the literature review is that syllable errors could appear in 119 words out of 312 as shown in Table 6. The syllable errors were counted based on mis-transcribed words that could be explained by the application of Vietnamese syllable structure in the production of English syllables in the pronunciation test (see section 2.1.4.1, p.67 for more details). These errors were analysed using SPSS
3.2.2.2 Questionnaire data analysis

The questionnaire data were analysed as follows. The questions were given based around the independent variables to examine the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable (outcomes of pronunciation test) with the presupposition that: (1) those who received little or no English pronunciation instruction will have more errors than will those who were taught pronunciation; and (2) those who used their English in oral communication (particularly with foreigners) will make fewer errors than will those who had no communication or less communication. In other words, the independent variables such as pronunciation instruction versus no pronunciation instruction, exposure versus no exposure (demonstrated via pronunciation practice versus no pronunciation practice, and oral communication and no oral communication) variables were looked into in comparison with the pronunciation scores (dependent variable).

3.2.2.3 Interview data analysis

The data analysis process undertaken involved a coding-based analysis of ideas and themes in the interview transcripts using discourse analysis (DA). The use of themes is one of the common ways to analyse qualitative data, as Creswell (2008) stated “[t]hemes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database, they form a core element in qualitative analysis” (p. 256). The use of themes is also one of different forms of Discourse Analysis. This view is identified by Fulcher (2012), who suggested “[t]hematic analysis is about trying to identify meaningful categories or themes in a body of data. By looking at the text, the researcher asks whether a number of recurring themes can be abstracted about what is being said” (p. 4). In this study, first by listening to the interactions and reading the transcripts, chunking the data, categorizing them, moving them around and rearranging them, then analysing initial data, and eliminating redundancies in the interview of this research, major themes related to the research question, “Why do Vietnamese speakers make so many
pronunciation errors?” were identified. Then, in order to gain an insight into the major themes, the study tried to discover what was socially constructed and how language was used in the interview texts.

Discourse Analysis is a linguistic approach to talk and text that tries to see how the speakers’ choice of words construct ‘social reality’, as discourse researchers argue people construct their own ‘versions’ of social reality in everyday conversation (Abell and Stokoe, 1999). According to Halliday, the major developer of Systemic Functional Grammar in the 1960s, DA explores how language is used in social contexts to achieve particular goals such as conveying information/ideas (as cited in O’Connell 2012, p.2). Potter and Wetherell (1987) stated, “[p]eople use their language to do things” (p. 32). In this study, the interview data were analysed on the basis of DA with a focus on themes and language exposed via turn-takings of the interviews.

4 BIAS, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

To minimize bias for this study, multiple data gathering instruments were designed and procedures conducted. The pronunciation test and the questionnaire were designed based on the considerations as follows.

The questionnaire design was reviewed with care and involved pilot testing which examined its length and problems with particular items to enhance the quality.

In addition, in order to prevent the participants’ fatigue, nervousness and misinterpretation of the questions, Vietnamese was applied to explain or clarify all the questions and the relevant responses. Some examples were handed out for trial to the 50 participants and they were asked to respond to them at home.

In order to assure optimal circumstances for the test which would reduce bias of the data, the pronunciation test was carried out in a quiet place, at an agreed time, when the students felt comfortable to do it. The raters were selected on the basis of the two listener factors as
discussed: the raters’ familiarity with the Vietnamese accent and, the raters’ ability to use contextual clues when listening (See section 3.1.3 ten intelligibility raters).

The data from the qualitative research paradigm aimed to achieve a high level of validity and reliability since the researcher triangulated different data sources such as the in-depth interviews of four English lecturers and the ten volunteer student interviews which had been independently conducted in the light of the data already gained from the questionnaire.

In order to limit bias for pronunciation data, the 50 students’ pronunciation performance in the pronunciation test was measured with special care. The ten raters were selected based on the criteria such as the listener’s familiarity with the Vietnamese accent and the listener’s linguistic proficiency. Then, to make sure the raters gave proper assessments on the 50 Vietnamese adult EFL speakers’ intelligibility, they were provided with a clear instruction about what and how to assess the recordings assigned to them. This was supported by some additional explanations in face-to-face conversations or via email to clarify any confusion.

5 IMPLICATIONS

This study’s findings confirmed that teaching speech is indispensable for the purpose of achieving real communication. Learning pronunciation should not only focus on segmental features but syllable structure and other suprasegmental features as well.

The dissimilarities of syllable structures between the Vietnamese tonal language and the English language could be one of the main causes which make Vietnamese EFL learners’ speech unintelligible. Therefore, rules or principles of syllable structures between the two languages should be introduced in the classroom to assist students in pronouncing English CVC syllables exactly and in using connected sounds and syllables in English polysyllabic words. All these hypotheses and assumptions strongly justify this research and make it very significant for Vietnamese learners and teachers of English.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to report on the results and findings from the analysis of the quantitative data and qualitative data. It includes the outcomes attained through the analysis of the pronunciation data, questionnaire data, teachers’ interview data and students’ interview data.

Initially, the chapter concentrates on the interpretation of the outcomes and findings of the data analysis based on the results of the pronunciation test in which the 50 students had already participated, as reported by the raters. It starts with the presentation of the evaluation of the informants’ pronunciation errors, followed by the syllable errors and how they impact the participants’ intelligibility. This section ends with problems emerging from the classification of errors, and conclusion.

The first section is followed by the presentation of the results gained from the analysis of the questionnaire data. In order to investigate the reasons why the students’ intelligibility is so low. This section focuses on interpreting the results and findings associated with the analysis of four main points, namely pronunciation and oral communication instruction as a cause, lack of practice and exposure to authentic language, why pronunciation and oral communication are not explicitly taught, and lack of practice outside the classroom. The section also includes a conclusion.

Finally, this chapter continues with the description of the results and findings emerging from the data analysis of the teachers’ interviews before presenting those of the analysis of the students’ interviews. These findings underpin the answer to the research question, “Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?” attained from the questionnaire data. The outcomes from these two sources also highlight some additional reasons for the weaknesses of
the students’ pronunciation. The report ends with an outline of the findings of the current study.

2. RESULTS OF PRONUNCIATION TEST DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the pronunciation test data analysis was to find responses to the following research questions:

- Is the investigated cohort of students’ speech unintelligible?
- How does syllable structure affect their intelligibility?
- Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?

First, a diagnosis was made for each participant separately, based on the informants’ pronunciation problems and speech intelligibility that the raters had established while looking at words or statements that they could not understand and/or wrongly transcribe. Then, an examination of how syllable errors affect their speech production was carried out before discussing problems associated with the classification of errors. Lastly this section presents conclusion.

2.1 Evaluation of pronunciation errors

The evaluation of the speakers’ pronunciation errors was based on the number of words which were omitted or wrongly transcribed in the 50 transcripts by the ten raters. Such omitted words and mis-transcribed words indicated the raters’ level of understanding of the speakers’ speech which was used in order to examine the first research question “Do the participants have English pronunciation problems?” In other words, this part focuses on presenting the results and findings gained by the analysis of the participants’ errors in terms of words and statements to observe whether or not the EFL students’ intelligibility is low. The raw data, which were collected from the 50 transcriptions made by the ten raters, were arranged into five columns (see Table 1, Appendix 2, p. 147. The first column refers to the number of the 50 speakers’ transcripts ranging from one to fifty. The second refers to the number of words
which were correctly transcribed by the ten raters. The third column displays the total words in the original text. The fourth represents each participant’s pronunciation errors, while the fifth column indicates how many statements out of 17 in the original text were rightly written out by the ten raters. All of this was summarised in a table (see Table 1, Appendix 2, p. 147). The pronunciation errors were consistently analysed in comparison with the total words of the original text using the SPSS software program or other established programs and statistical formulas (e.g., Excel) to examine the informants’ English pronunciation competence in general. The analysis was based on the statistical values such as Mean, Range, Mode, Medium, Standard deviation, Standard errors, and 95% Confidence Interval of Difference. They were reinforced by two pie-charts and one diagram. The findings, as presented in detail below, show that the 50 students’ intelligibility was very low, indicating that their pronunciation competence is weak.

2.1.1 **Errors on basis of words missed out or wrongly transcribed**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the participants’ errors were measured by the number of words which had been missed out or mis-transcribed by the ten raters. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to present the outcomes through the analysis of the statistical values calculated based on the data summarised in Table 1 from Appendix 2 (p. 147), as described in the data analysis process.
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

Figure 5. Frequency of 50 participants’ pronunciation errors

Table 7 below shows the values estimated on the basis of the number of errors made by the 50 participants in terms of words.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of the participants’ pronunciation errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ pronunciation errors</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Mean})</td>
<td>224.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Std Deviation})</td>
<td>44.01484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Minimum})</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Maximum})</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Range})</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\text{Std error})</td>
<td>6.2246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the descriptive statistics in Table 7, it can be seen that the mean pronunciation score shows that on average, the 50 participants (Vietnamese adult EFL learners) made 224.8 errors from the 312 words on the pronunciation test (see Appendix 2 and appendix 3, p.147 and p.149 respectively), equalling 72.05 percent. Figure 6 and Appendix 2 demonstrate that 27 out of the 50 participants (54 percent of the subjects) made pronunciation errors above the mean 224.8. It can be also seen from Table 7 that the minimum number of errors, 138, indicates that 44.23 percent of the whole pronunciation text is omitted or mis-transcribed, although there is a large range (171) between the minimum, 138, and the maximum, 309, accounting for over 99 percent of the total of words (312), which is supported by a large standard deviation of 44 showing that the data points are very far from the mean. This is also illustrated in the Figure 7 below which indicates that 68 percent of the errors are within 180 and 268 with one standard deviation from the mean.

Another statistical value which needs to be estimated is the confidence interval of the mean since such statistics are used to determine the range of the interval within which 95 percent of all samples will have the population mean. The range of the confidence interval is defined by the sample mean ± margin of error and where margin of error (ME) = critical value * standard error. The critical value expressed as a t score, is evaluated by the following steps:

1. Compute alpha (α): α = 1 - (confidence level / 100) = 0.05
2. Find the critical probability (p*): p* = 1 - α/2 = 1 - 0.05/2 = 0.975
3. Find the df = n - 1 = 50 - 1 = 49
4. The critical value is the t score having 49 degrees of freedom and a cumulative probability equal to 0.975. From the t Distribution Calculator on the stattrek.com, we find that the critical value is 2.010.

Then, the margin of error = critical value * standard error = 2.010 * 6.2246 (table2) = 12.51.
Therefore, the range of the confidence interval is the sample mean + margin of error = 224.8 + 12.51 = (212.29 - 237.31). These values coincide with the ones which were checked again using SPSS program. In other words, on 95 percent of the occasions a researcher would theoretically conduct his/her study, the population mean errors estimated by the statistic being reported would be somewhere between the lower value, 212.2911 and upper value, 237.3089 (around the mean 224.8), ranging from 68 percent to 75.96 percent in comparison with 312 words.

All of these values, therefore, provide evidence that the mother tongue strongly impacts on Vietnamese adult EFL students’ pronunciation achievement, indicating that this is a major factor which affects the informants’ speech intelligibility.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212.2911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6*  
SD = 44.01 from the Mean pronunciation errors
2.1.2 Errors assessed by uncompleted statements in transcripts

As discussed previously, the 50 participants’ pronunciation errors were also assessed by the number of sentences in the original text which were missed out or uncompleted.

To support this evidence, the analysis also looked at the number of sentences realized in the 10 raters’ 50 transcripts. The pronunciation test consisted of 312 words creating 17 sentences with the mean of 18.45 words per sentence (see Appendix 2, p.147). Figure 8 shows that no complete statement exists in 41 out of the 50 transcripts, encompassing 82 percent of the participants, while five of the rest reveal one short complete statement, six words, “Otherwise, stress can make you panic” far away from the 18.35 mean of sentence words. Even the maximum number of complete sentences which was interpreted in only one transcript is three compared with the 17 sentences, accounting for over 17.6 percent (see Figure 9 below). All of this shows that the whole message from the pronunciation test (formatted in a reading text) performed by the 50 participants was almost not understood at all.

*Figure 7* Complete statements (correctly recognized) versus no complete statements in the 50 transcripts.
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

Figure 8. A largest number of statements from the only one transcript versus the number of statements wrongly transcribed or missed out in the pronunciation test.

In conclusion, the message of the original talk was mostly not understood at all, as the outcomes show that a very high percentage of words or sentences were omitted or wrongly interpreted in the 50 transcripts. This indicates that the participants have serious pronunciation problems.

2.1.3 Difference in the assessment provided by native and non-native raters

A question to emerge from the study is whether or not there are any differences in the assessments of the native compared with non-native raters. It is hard to make a convincing case for differences in the assessment by the two groups, because of the fact that the group of 25 students whose intelligibility was judged by the native raters was different from the group of 25 students who were assessed by the non-native raters. However, a general comment on differences between these two groups of raters could be made through the calculation of between-group t-test (or unpaired t-test). The outcome of an unpaired t-test calculation using SPSS or on-line GraphPad is 0.732, much greater than the significant level, 0.05. By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be said that there is no difference in pronunciation errors between these two groups of
students, indicating that there is no difference in the assessment provided by the native raters and non-native raters.

2.1.4 Syllable errors

As discussed in Chapter three, the 50 informants’ incorrect pronunciation of words that could affect their speech intelligibility were classified into syllable structure errors. It was found from this that syllable structure errors in the 50 transcripts were likely to occur to 119 out of the 312 words in the original text used for the pronunciation test as shown in Table 6. They consist of 23 words with the final syllabic lateral /l/; 30 words ending with final consonants: /t/, /s/, /d/, /th/ and /st/; 11 words featuring CCV syllable structure; 8 words associated with CVC in which V is a shared diphthong; and 47 multisyllabic words (see Table 6, p 50). From the 50 transcripts, the syllable errors could have been recognized through the mis-transcribed words. For instance, ‘where below’ in transcript 4, transcript 5, or transcript 10, transcript 18 or transcript 44, which was a result of wrong transcription of the original ‘well below,’ could be verified as syllable errors. This is because these errors were brought about by the application of the Vietnamese open syllable CV (in where) to produce closed syllable CVL (in well). Based on this, total of syllable errors were counted for each transcript. As a result, 503 syllable errors were counted. They were discussed in details in the following sections.

2.1.4.1 How the syllable errors have an impact on the speakers’ intelligibility

The impact of syllable errors on the cohort of the students’ intelligibility could have been demonstrated through the basic statistical values using the SPPSS as shown in Table 9 below.

It can be seen from Table 9 that there are 503 syllable errors counted from the 50 transcripts. These data show that there is an influence of syllable errors on the Vietnamese speakers’ intelligibility. Table 9 shows that on average, 10.6 errors (Error Mean) were found, indicating that about every 11 original words from 119 test words has a syllable error recognized. The
data from Table 9 also show that most of the data [44 out of 50 transcripts (88 percent), ranging from 8 to a maximum of 17] are near or above the Mean. Additionally, many words were, in general, omitted in almost all transcripts. Therefore, based on what has been transcribed in the 50 transcripts, 503 syllable errors could be a considerable number that could tell us about the impact of the syllable errors on the investigated cohort of the speakers’ intelligibility. How the syllable errors impact on the students’ intelligibility is presented in the next section.

Table 9

Frequency of syllable errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 10.06
Sum = 503.00

2.1.4.1.1  How the use of the CV has an effect on the articulation of closed syllables

Comparisons between the original pronunciation text and the 50 transcripts produced by the raters have been made consistent with the classifications depicted in the methodology. Consequently, the findings which are discovered through the contrasts in such categories really underpin the method of the divisions of potential errors demonstrated in the
methodology and literature review. These findings, particularly regarding the syllable structure errors are exemplified in Tables 10-14 below.

**CV to CVL**

Table 16 below shows the errors caused by the application of the Vietnamese open CV made by the participants to produce English closed syllable, CVL in the pronunciation test. The table consists of three columns of which the first column shows raters and their transcripts, the second column contains the original words with the final syllabic lateral /l/ in the pronunciation tests (formatted in a reading text) and the third column shows the variants of the phonemic representation of the original words in the second column. These variants are regarded as evidence of the participants’ pronunciation errors, brought about by application of the Vietnamese open syllable CV to the English closed syllable CVL in their speech. The abbreviations of the first column are clarified as follows: L1 and T1 stand for rater 1 and transcript 1. Then, for example, the variant of the original word ‘all’ (in column 2) is ‘or’ (in column 3) which is found in L5.T23 of column 1 which is an abbreviation of listener 5 and transcript 23. In other words, this variant, ‘or’ from the original word ‘all’ was found in transcript 23 by rater 5.

**Table 10**

*Errors caused by the application of CV*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters’ Transcripts No</th>
<th>English CVL</th>
<th>Vietnamese CV or CVN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1 – L10: T1 - T50</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5.T23, L2.T10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Or, a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1.T2, L2, T6, T7, L4.T17</td>
<td></td>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed out in 49 out of the 50 transcripts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1.T1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.T6</td>
<td>Still</td>
<td>Stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T31</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.T10</td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L9.T41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8.T36</td>
<td></td>
<td>Or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td>Well-below</td>
<td>Far below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L9.T43</td>
<td></td>
<td>..below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.T6</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4.T16, L10.T46,47,49</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8.T36,39</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T33</td>
<td></td>
<td>Precious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8.T32</td>
<td></td>
<td>The show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T35</td>
<td>Pulse</td>
<td>Boost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Burst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T47</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1.T4, L7.T35</td>
<td>Calmly</td>
<td>Carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T47</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T46</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 10, the students produced the Vietnamese CV syllable structure in the pronunciation test, rather than the English closed syllable CVL, supporting the assumption noted in the literature review that English CVL is converted into various forms of Vietnamese CV. It is obvious from Table 10 that there were a great number of variants from the 13 original words with a percentage of 56.52 of 23, on which evidence the open syllable CV in articulation of the English closed syllable CVL is based. The specific variants were identified as follows:

- /ɔːl/ as in ‘all’ is pronounced as [αː:] as in ‘are’ or [ɔː:] as in ‘or’. Table 10 shows that ‘are’ appears in the 50 transcripts written by all the ten raters, indicating that the variant [αː:] from the /ɔːl/ is almost certainly resulted from the application of Vietnamese open syllables to produce the English closed syllable CVL.

- /ɪl/ as in ‘still’ is converted into [juː] as in ‘used’ and ‘stew’ found in transcript 1 and transcript 31 respectively, or into [eɪ] as in ‘stay’ interpreted by listener 2 in transcript 6 while /Il/ as in ‘skill’ is also shifted into [juː] as in ‘skew’. It can be inferred from these variations the [juː] (sound like [tu] in Vietnamese) applied to produce /Il/ is more recurrent than the other forms [eɪ].
There are many more findings which are unveiled in this table e.g. ‘well-below’ could have been articulated ‘where below’ by speaker 5, speaker 10 and speaker 18, or ‘or below’, and ‘far below’ by other speakers; ‘failed’ has been recognized as ‘fair’, ‘far’ by rater 2 in transcript 6 and listener 10 in transcript 50 respectively. Such transmission of the English CVL into different forms of CV could also be found in other words in Table 16, reflecting that the Vietnamese open syllable CV could have been applied to pronounce the English CVL.

Attention should be paid to double errors in single words which could have resulted either from the application of Vietnamese CV in production of the English CVL or from another cause. For instance, the word ‘results’, has been interpreted as ‘research’, ‘precious’ and ‘the show’. Whether or not other errors like [ʃ] in ‘research’, [s] in ‘precious’, and no final /st/ in ‘the show’ as a result of conversion of the final cluster /st/ as in ‘results’ might account for these variants is a contentious point. However, closer examination of two of the three variations from ‘results’ reveals that there is transmission from open syllable CVL as /ɔl/ in the second syllable of ‘results’ to open syllables as [sa:] in ‘research’ and [ɪə:] in ‘precious’ because of no existence of the final syllabic consonant in Vietnamese, leading to the application of the open syllable CV [sa:] or [ɪə:] in production of CVL /ɔl/. In other words, replacing the closed syllable /ʌl/ with the open syllable /əl/ could have had a strong influence on such transcripts. That is, such a phonetic variant [ə] from the phonemic representation /ʌl/ could have made the raters consider other words instead of ‘results’, in which the consonants sound nearly alike. All in all, all the alterations have mostly proved that the various CV forms such as [sa:] in research, [ɪə] in ‘precious’ and [ɪəʊ] in ‘the show’ have been applied to produce CVL /ɔl/ in ‘results’, reflecting the fact that the Vietnamese open syllable CV could have been employed to pronounce the English closed syllable CVL.
**CV to Polysyllabic Words**

A clear separation between two or more adjacent syllables in multi-syllabic words in English has been shown to be a major factor in making the participant’s speech unintelligible as proved above. This is mainly caused by the application of the CV structure to the participant’s pronunciation of English multi-syllabic words associated with the sequence of CVC.VC.V(C) in the pronunciation test, making the syllables in adjacency unlinked. Table 11 below shows solid evidence for such pronunciation habits, strongly underpinned by the comments given by rater 10

Table 11 displays the errors which were mainly caused by the open syllables the participants used to pronounce closed syllables of polysyllabic words in the pronunciation test, making their speech unintelligible.

Table 11

*Errors caused by the application of open syllable CV to multisyllabic words*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters’ transcripts No</th>
<th>English multi-syllabic words</th>
<th>Vietnamese CV to multi-syllabic words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1-L10 (T1_T50)</td>
<td>Exam time</td>
<td>The same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.T8, T9, L4.T17 L5.T23</td>
<td>Exam performance</td>
<td>The same performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-L10 (T1-T50)</td>
<td>Exam paper</td>
<td>The same paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4.T17</td>
<td>With any exam</td>
<td>With any of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L9.T44</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>.damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T33</td>
<td>Physiological</td>
<td>Physical or logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L9.T43</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seek for logical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2.T8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physiolo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

| L2.T9          | …logical          |
| L50.T46_T50   | Phy-si-lo-gi-cal |
| L4.T20        | Psychologically   | Psychology call it |
| L7.T33        | Psychology colleague |
| L7.T32        | Biology colleague |
| L7.T35        | Psychology causes |
| L10.T47       | Psychology course |
| L10.T46,48,49,50 | Psy-cho-lo-gi-ca-ly |
| L5.T23        | Assess            | ..sence            |
| L10.T46       | a set             |
| L7.T34        | Physically        | Physics colleague  |
| L10.T46-T50   | Phy-si-cal-ly (or) | phy si ca lly     |
| L7.T34        | Purposes          | Purpo              |
| L1.T2         | Rely              | We lie             |
| L4.T16        | Rationally        | Ra-tio-nal-ly     |
| L10.T46-T50   | Ridiculously      | Very curious      |
| L10.T46-T50   | Attend            | a-tend            |
| L7.T33        | Organized         | All…nice          |
| L1.T1         | Ori-enized        |
| L5.T21        | (they) allocate   | (they) allow…     |
| L7.T34 | (they) are ok | L9.T44, T42 | Or locate, .locate |
| L10.T46 | Our case | L10.T47 | Other click |
| L10.T49 | That ok | L10.T49 | Ask acate |
| L10.T50 | Air locate | L4.17 | Allocate (to study) |
| | A located study | L10.T47-50 | a-llo-cate |

| L2.T10 | Overestimate | L7.T31 | Over active mate |
| L10.T46, T50 | Over-est-i-mate | L10.T47 | Over timatic |
| L10.T49, T50 | Other rest ti mated | L10.T50 | Under-es-ti-ma-ted |
| L10.T46.50 | Underestimate | | Under resumate |

| L2.T9 | Most effective way | L10.T46.50 | Mostly motive way |
| L1.T2 | Achieve | | e-ffec-ti-ve |
| L10.T50 | A chief | | |
| L10.T46 | Affect | | A fact |
Unlinked syllables adjacent to polysyllabic words caused by the application of open syllable CV in the pronunciation of closed syllables could give rise to new words or phrases or non-English words which were very unlike the original words used in the pronunciation test. It is shown in Table 11 that there were a number of variants of a single polysyllabic word as a consequence of such a pronunciation habit. It can be stated that the variants of ‘exam’ appear in all the 50 transcriptions while different variants of the other original words can be found in different transcripts by different raters. All of this indicates that the application of the open syllable CV in articulation of English polysyllabic words associated with a sequence of CVC.VC.V(C) frequently creates strange prosody for the interlocutors, leading them to understand these as new words or phrases that are different from the original. For instance, the original ‘allocate’ is a polysyllabic word since it is made up of three syllables, which are linked together in natural speech. This pronunciation sounds reasonable on the basis of the maximum onset and coda principles which require that a short vowel never ends a syllable, indicating that the first syllable of the allocate is /al/ (Roach, 2002).

However, this is a controversial problem and “[m]any linguists have come up with a new term for the consonant /l/ in this context as semi-syllabic” (Roach, 2002, p. 47). In other words, this lateral belongs to both the first syllable and the second syllable, implying that it is linked between the first syllable and second syllable in pronunciation. The variants of this word, however, demonstrate a clear separation between them. This is shown in Table 11 where the pronunciation of ‘allocate’ has been transcribed as ‘or locate’ in transcript 41 by rater 9 or ‘air locate’ by rater 10 in transcript 50. Both variants show a clear split of the vowel of the first
syllable from its final lateral as a result of the application of open syllable CV, which should have been linked together in accordance with the maximum onset and coda principles. It can be inferred that this separation probably creates hiatuses between the first syllable and second syllable, mainly involving creation of the new words (variants) ‘or locate’ and ‘air locate’, the meanings of which are vastly different from the original. The split can also be found in many more variants from ‘allocate’ such as, ‘are ok’ in transcript 34, ‘that ok’ in transcript 49 and others by different raters, which reflects the fact that the participants have applied the Vietnamese open syllable CV to articulate closed syllables of this word.

Many more demonstrations of such a pronunciation habit can be found based on a variety of new words or phrases from the other polysyllabic words in Table 11, like ‘a fact’ from ‘affect’ in transcript 46, ‘we lie’ from ‘rely’ in transcript 2, or ‘a set’ from ‘assess’ in transcript 34 and so forth. One more example from the table which needs to be noted is different variants of the original, ‘psychologically’, reflecting the usage of the open syllable CV to the sequence of CVC.VC.V(C) shown in the last four syllables, log,ic.all,y of the ‘psychologically’ It has been transferred into ‘psychology call it’ in transcript 21, ‘spychology colleague’ in transcript 33, biology colleague in transcript 32 and ‘psychology course’ in transcript 10. All of these variants show the open syllable /y/ applied to the fourth closed syllable /ic/, rather than linking them together as a single word. This clear separation could have been mistakenly recognized as two separate words by the raters/listeners.

A hyphen (-) is used between the syllables of divided words as an indicator of the application of CV in articulation of English polysyllabic words. As can be seen from Table 11, many polysyllabic words have been transcribed with the hyphen between the syllables by rater 10, who had a master degree in applied linguistics and, who had taught English professionally in Australia for many years. Such transcriptions were strongly supported by her overall comments on the five recordings assigned to her to assess, namely that there was a clear
separation of multisyllabic words in the participants’ pronunciation (Appendix 9, p. 226). ‘Spy-cho-lo-gi-cal-ly’ from the original word, ‘psychologically’; phy-si-lo-gi-cal’ from ‘physiological’; a-llo-cate from ‘allocate’ and so forth are some of the examples that can be found in the table, supporting this argument. Noticeably, her divisions of the syllables also reflect that the open syllables were being employed to articulate closed syllables of polysyllabic words.

In summary, all of these findings suggest that the participants have applied the Vietnamese open syllable CV to produce their English closed syllables of polysyllabic words, which is likely to cause clear pauses between the syllables in adjacency, making their speech unintelligible. Importantly, the findings have supplied evidence that the Vietnamese open syllable CV is a significant factor which influences the informants’ pronunciation of English polysyllabic words, making their speech unintelligible.

**CV to CVM/N/K**

The usage of the Vietnamese CV in production of the English CVC also happens to other forms besides the CVL. The findings shown in Table 17 strongly support the assumption suggested in the literature review (Dang, 2006) that the CV could be applied to produce English CVC in which V is one of the shared diphthongs and final C is one of the shared consonants (see Figure 2 and Figure 3, p. 22).

Table 12

*Errors caused by the application of CV to CVM/N/K*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>raters’ transcripts No</th>
<th>English CVC (n, m, k)</th>
<th>Vietnamese CV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1-L10 (T1-T50)</td>
<td>Known</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1-L10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In spite of the existence of the final nasal consonants, /n/ and /m/ and final voiceless velar consonant /k/ in Vietnamese, Table 18 indicates that the participants have missed these final sounds in the environment of the CVC in which its vowel is a diphthong because in the Vietnamese language, the final nasal consonants /n/, /m/ and /k/ do not follow a diphthong (see Figure 2, p. 24). In other words, the /n/, /m/ and /k/ only go with a single vowel or unshared triple vowels (see Figure 3, p. 22). All of this indicates Vietnamese adult EFL/ESL learners had a tendency to apply the Vietnamese CV to the English CVC pronunciation in which V is a shared diphthong and final C (consonant) is one of the three shared consonants /m/, /n/, and /k/ in the pronunciation tests (see Figure 3). On the basic criteria, there are eight words with this CVC structure in the original text of the pronunciation tests which have been listed in Table 6 of the methodology section on page 50.

Table 12 above illustrates the transmission from the English CVC to the Vietnamese CV, shown via the variants of the original words, ‘known’, ‘mind’, ‘down’. ‘known’ has three variants, ‘no’, ‘now’ and ‘know’ in which the first variant exists in all the 50 transcripts, very strongly suggesting that the final sound in the English syllable structure CVC is omitted in the participants’ speech due to the application of the Vietnamese CV to their English pronunciation. Some more evidence is also found in different variants from ‘mind’, ‘down’ as
shown in the same table, reinforcing this argument. All in all, no matter what the variants are, these results indicate that the Vietnamese syllable structures have been applied to pronounce the English syllable structure, thereby making the investigated subjects’ English speech unintelligible.

2.1.4.1.2 The participants’ intelligibility is affected by the difference of distribution of vowels and final consonants in the CVC structure in English and Vietnamese

2.1.4.1.2.1 Vietnamese CVK applied to articulate English CVC

The insertion of the velar [k] in Vietnamese adult speakers’ English speech is another problem, which potentially impacts on their intelligibility due to the nature of the Vietnamese CVK as distinctly described in the literature review and Table 4 on page 26. Below are the findings from the 50 transcripts, which strengthen the explanations and assumption related to this problem as discussed in the literature review (Dang, 2008).

Table 13

Errors brought about the application of CVK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters’ transcripts No</th>
<th>English CVC (s, st, t, d, th)</th>
<th>Vietnamese CVK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1.T4</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4.T16, L7.T34</td>
<td></td>
<td>Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T31</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Streks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4.T16</td>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Except</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7.T33, L10.48</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4.T.20</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Takes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8.T38, L7.T31&amp;T32</td>
<td>Take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T47,48&amp;49</td>
<td>Affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L4.T16</th>
<th>Shortness</th>
<th>Shock is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L8.T31</td>
<td>Shock its</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T46</td>
<td>Arsenic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1.T3</th>
<th>Need(s)</th>
<th>Neeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L8.T37</td>
<td>Leak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L8.T31</td>
<td>Steak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L4.T16</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Rest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L7.T33</td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L8.T38</th>
<th>Breath</th>
<th>Break</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L7.T33</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Look</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L10.T50</th>
<th>Sweaty</th>
<th>Squicky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L7.T33</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>The box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L10.T50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repok</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted in Chapter two on page 26, Dang (2008) suggested that Vietnamese adult learners have a tendency to insert the voiceless velar [k] into the English CVC in their speech, in which the final syllabic consonants that are substituted in this structure include /s/, /t/, /d/, /st/ and /th/. The findings from Table 13 provide strong support for such a pronunciation habit, affecting the participants’ speech intelligibility. There is strong evidence that the final syllabic consonants of CVC as /s/ as in ‘stress’, ‘assess’, ‘shortness’; /t/ as in ‘put’, ‘reports’, ‘sweaty’, shortness; /d/ as in ‘need’, ‘read’, ‘grades’, ‘overestimated’, ‘underestimated’ ‘good’; /st/ as in ‘test’; and /th/ as in ‘breath’ have received the addition of the velar [k] in this structure. Specifically, the velar [k] was also found in quite a few non-sense words such as arsenic, neeks, squickly, repok, slapernic, over ..timatic, under..timatic and strek, indicating that the insertion of [k] was generally noticed in the raters’ transcriptions as it appears in a great number of the transcripts by all ten raters. All of this strongly suggests that the
Vietnamese CVK structure has a large impact on the participants’ pronunciation of the CVC structures in English.

**CVK for CVS**

The first evidence of the influence of [k] on the pronunciation of English CVC structure comes from different variants of ‘assess’ which was interpreted as ‘except’ in transcript 16; ‘accept’ in transcript 22 and transcript 48 by rater 7 and rater 10; and ‘access’ in transcript 50. [k] appears in the first syllables of these ‘new’ words, except, accept and access due to the final syllabic consonant /s/ of the first syllable of the original word ‘assess’. This argument is strongly supported by different variants from the original word, ‘stress’. It is converted into ‘risk’, ‘text’, speak, and ‘strek’ in transcript 4, transcripts 16 and 34, transcript 31 and transcript 50 respectively. All of these ‘strange’ words contain the final syllabic velar [k], indicating that the insertion of the voiceless velar [k] in the production of the words that end with ‘s’ follows a regular analogy pattern. This could have influenced the raters’ recognition of ‘stress’ as the original word. It is particularly obvious that the variant, ‘streks’, despite its meaninglessness, could have been deliberately transcribed in this way by rater 10, who has been a teacher of English in Australia for years, implying that the velar /k/ in the articulation of the word ‘stress’ was deliberately performed by the participants. This could be an answer to why the original word ‘stress’ was omitted in many transcripts. This interpretation is strengthened by the observation that none of the transcripts captured all five of the occurrences of the word ‘stress’ that appeared in the pronunciation tests. Further evidence is found in the variant, ‘arsenic’ in transcript 46 from ‘the shortness’, and in the variant, ‘slaperonic’ from ‘sleeplessness in transcript 46. Both variants show the appearance of the voiceless velar consonant /k/ at the end of their final syllable under the influence of the CVS structure of the original words, ‘shortness’ and ‘sleeplessness’ although there could be other causes for these variants. However the presence of the velar [k] in their speech probably
affected the interpretation of these new words. All in all, the findings suggest that the application of CVK in the participants’ pronunciation in the test has affected their speech intelligibility.

**CVK for CVST**

The presence of the voiceless velar consonant [k] in the syllable structure CVST is also shown in Table 13 in the use of such four variants as, ‘takes’, ‘take’, ‘text’ and ‘affect’ from the original word, ‘test’, supporting the suggestion discussed in the literature review that the syllable structure CVK might be employed to pronounce the English CVST, giving rise to ‘strange’ words which sound very different from the target word. In fact, all the four variants are different from the original word, ‘test’ due to the insertion of the voiceless velar [k]. Additionally, in many other transcripts, the word ‘test’ has been omitted. All of this indicates that the participants also have a pronunciation problem with English words containing the syllable structure CVST under the influence of Vietnamese CVK.

**CVK for CVT**

Table 13 reveals that the CVK is also applied to produce the English CVT structure. This problem is strongly illustrated by different variants, such as; ‘shock is’ and ‘shock its’ from the target word, ‘shortness’; ‘the box’ and ‘repok’ from the original word, ‘reports’; ‘squickly’ from the ‘sweaty’; and ‘booked’ from ‘put’. It can be clearly seen from the first target word ‘shortness’ that its first syllable carrying the structure CVT, ‘short’ has been converted into ‘CVK in its variants, ‘shock is’ in transcript 16 and ‘shock its’ in transcript 31. Such application of CVK is also found in the other words as mentioned above. Thus, it can be inferred that the variants reflect the impact of the syllable structure CVK on the informants’ English CVT articulation in the pronunciation tests.
**CVK for CVD**

The final syllabic consonant /d/ in the syllable structure CVD shares such phonetic values as alveolar and stop with the consonant /t/, showing the same place and manner of articulation (see 2.2.2.2.1 of literature review, p. 26). Thus, it is not unusual that the CVK is still seen in the variants from the original words shown in Table 13. For instance, the word, ‘need(s)’ has been changed to ‘neeks’, ‘leak’ and ‘steak’ by rater 1, rater 8 and rater 7 in transcript 3, transcript 37 and transcript 31 respectively. Likewise, the insertion of the voiceless velar consonant [k] exists in all the variants from the other target words ‘read’, ‘good’, ‘grades’, ‘overestimated’ and ‘underestimated’ despite the appearance of other phonetic variations. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the presence of the velar [k] suggests the influence of the CVK on the English CVD pronunciation performed by the participants.

**CVK for CVTh**

It appears justified to claim that CVK also has an effect on the participants’ pronunciation of the English CVTh structure. This is evidenced in Table 13 where the variant ‘break’ is a result of the transfer of the original word, ‘breath’ in transcript 38. That is, CVK in the Vietnamese output ‘break’ reflects the perceived articulation CVTh of the English word ‘breath’.

2.1.4.1.2.2 Vietnamese CVN applied to articulate English CVL

It can be seen from Table 10 (p. 69) that the CVN structure is also applied to articulate the English CVL structure although the CV structure is much more common in use due to there being only five variants of original words as a result of the conversion into CVN structure from the target CVL. However, such a change can be considered as another problem the cohort of students have with production of the English CVL, in addition to the effect of open syllable CV on articulation of the English CVL as discussed above. The CVN was specifically
transferred from ‘all’, ‘skill’, ‘also’, ‘results’, and ‘calmly’. These variants in bold in Table 10, show that ‘skill’ was transcribed as ‘skin’ by rater 2; ‘results’ was transcribed as ‘reasons’ in transcripts 36 and 39 by rater 8; ‘also’ was interpreted as ‘answer’ in transcript 42; ‘all’ was transcribed as ‘on’ by rater 1 and rater 2; and finally ‘calmly’ is recognized as ‘candy’. It is important to note, however, that there is no phonemic transcript /l/ in ‘calmly’.

The problem that this poses is that the participants might wrongly have thought that the letter ‘l’ in ‘calmly' represents the phonemic feature value. Therefore, the CVL ‘cal’ (mistaken by the participants) might be converted into CVN of the first syllable of ‘candy’, indicating that the CVN could have been used to pronounce the CVL in this word. The question this then raises is, on which condition would CVN be applied to articulate CVL? Dang (2006) suggested that in Vietnamese, the syllable structure CVN only exists in the environment of single vowels or unshared triple vowels. That is, it does not happen to shared diphthongs (see Figure 3, p. 22). All the five variants transcribed prove such a condition.

2.1.4.1.3 Vietnamese CV applied to pronounce English CCV

Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ CV habits which are applied to English pronunciation have also occurred in the English CCV structure in the pronunciation tests the participants undertook. Table 14 below lists the students’ pronunciation errors because of the application of Vietnamese CV to the English CCV.

Table 14

Errors caused by CV for CCV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters’ transcripts No</th>
<th>English CCV</th>
<th>Vietnamese CV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1.T1 &amp; T3</td>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>(p)roblem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L10.T47</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loblem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As described in the methodology chapter (see Table 6, p. 57), there are 11 words with the structure CCV in the original text in which five words, namely ‘problem’, ‘prepared’, ‘front up’, ‘played, and ‘pressure’ show the transmission of the English CCV into the Vietnamese CV, while the six other words have been omitted in many transcripts. Among the former is ‘prepared’, which is transcribed as ‘repay’, ‘repair’ and replayed by rater 1 in his transcript 3, rater 8 in his transcript 38 and rater 7 in his transcript 33 respectively. All the three variants of ‘prepared’ show that the structure CCV, /pre/ in the first syllable of the ‘prepared’ has been converted to the structure CV [re] in the first syllable of the variants. Similarly, such a variation (from CCV to CV) has also occurred to other words, ‘problem’, ‘pressure’, and ‘played’, indicating that the participants have a tendency to miss the first voiceless bilabial consonant /p/ in the cluster /pr/ due to the non-existence of CCV and the absence of initial voiceless bilabial stop in the Vietnamese language. Additionally, ‘front up’ is pronounced as ‘form a’ without [r] in this variant owing to no cluster /fr/ in the learners’ mother tongue in spite of the existence of initial labiodental fricative /l/ in the Vietnamese language. Generally-
speaking, all the variants in this table above prove that the Vietnamese CV has been applied to the English CCV pronunciation, supporting the assumption presented in the literature review (Dang, 2006).

Overall, all these findings can be regarded as solid evidence showing that the application of Vietnamese syllable structures for articulating the English syllable structures significantly impacted on the 50 Vietnamese adult EFL speakers’ intelligibility in the pronunciation test.

2.2 Contentious problems of classification of errors

2.2.1 Syllable structure errors or stress errors

There is an overlap in the classification of syllable structure errors and stress errors, which will be clarified in this section. A question arising is whether the participants produce errors when pronouncing poly-syllabic words resulting from the clear separation of adjacent syllables or from the non-standard use of syllable stress (Zielinski, 2006, see Chapter five, p. 131 for more details) or from the flat tone applied to all syllables (Dang, 2013). Based on the findings, it seems to be more reasonable to say that the former has a greater impact on the quality of raters’ transcriptions than the latter.

Firstly, the use of the flat tone may influence the pronunciation of multi-syllabic words by the Vietnamese speakers in the pronunciation test, as seen in rater 10’s claim that this tone has been applied (see Appendix 9, p. 225). However, there are indications to the contrary, as can be seen Table 11 on page 73 which shows that a separate division of syllables is mainly caused by the application of the CV syllable structure to the pronunciation of poly-syllabic words associated with the sequence of CVC.VC.VC, which results in the formation of new words, phrases or even non-English words. Secondly, such a disconnection between the syllables was in fact recognized by rater 10 with her use of the hyphen to mark the syllables of many of the words in a number of her transcripts. Finally, this is also reinforced by rater
10’s comment that there is a separation of multi-syllabic words in the five recordings she was assigned to listen to. In other words, all of these findings strongly indicate that the CV syllable structure has been applied to the pronunciation of multisyllabic words, largely influencing the quality of the raters’ transcripts.

2.2.2 Co-occurrence of errors between CV and CVN application to pronunciation of English CVL words

In a similar case, on some occasions, double errors could have been caused by both open syllable (CV) and CVN application for pronouncing CVL, constituting a dilemma for the researcher about whether these errors should be categorized as either Vietnamese CV or CVN. Nevertheless, Table 11 (p. 72) shows that the open syllable structure is more often applied to articulate the closed syllable structure CVL than the Vietnamese CVN is because there are many more variants that occur because of the use of an open syllable than by the application of CVN.

2.2.3 Co-occurrence of errors between CV application and insertion of consonant /k/ to articulation of multi-syllabic words

Another limitation of the classification of errors is that the wrong transcriptions of the word ‘assess’ could have been explained by either the application of open syllable or the insertion of the consonant /k/ in the production of the English CVC of this word. Such a quandary is exposed in its variants in Table 11 and its variants in Table 13 (p. 80). The mis-transcriptions were mainly due to the transfer of Vietnamese syllable pronunciation to English syllable pronunciation in the pronunciation test no matter what kind of errors they were.

2.3 Conclusion

The findings prove that the Vietnamese students’ intelligibility is so low and that in terms of syllable structures the impact of mother tongue of this cohort of Vietnamese adult EFL
learners on their English intelligibility in the pronunciation test was realizable. This is largely due to the transfer of their first language habits to English pronunciation. The findings illustrate that the application of the Vietnamese open syllables for articulating the English close syllables of poly-syllabic words and CVL/M/N/K syllable words and English CCV resulted in unconventional and perplexing prosody for the listeners, rendering the Vietnamese speakers unintelligible. Additionally, the outcomes reveal that the informants intelligibility is affected by the difference of distribution of vowels and final consonants in the CVC structure between English and Vietnamese. This is clearly reflected by the insertion of voiceless velar [k] in their pronunciation of English CVC.

3. **QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS**

This section aims to present the results of the questionnaire data analysis in order to investigate the reasons for the students’ low intelligibility in the pronunciation test. It commences with the interpretation of the results and findings with reference to analysis of the first main point - pronunciation and oral communication instruction as a cause for low intelligibility. Issues such as lack of pronunciation instruction, lack of oral communication instruction, and lack of both pronunciation and oral communication instruction will be, therefore, be explored. It also discusses the effect of pronunciation and oral communication instruction on the participants’ intelligibility to consider whether or not there is a difference between those who received pronunciation and oral communication instruction and those who did not. This comparison aims to justify the hypothesis that the more English practice and oral communication has been taught in the classroom, the fewer errors are made in speech production.

The section then continues with the presentation of the results obtained by analysing the second main point – lack of practice and exposure to authentic language in classrooms and outside classrooms as the major cause of unintelligibility. It is followed by the interpretation
of the findings through analysis of the third point – the reasons why pronunciation and oral communication have not been explicitly taught. Finally, this section ends with a summary of the findings revealed from the analysis.

3.1 How the analysis was conducted

The raw questionnaire data were summarized according to the three aforementioned points and presented in Table 15 below. The codes were double-checked by the researcher, and the questionnaire data and pronunciation data carried the same code for the same student. This ensured that the pronunciation data for each informant were correctly linked to the data gained from the same participant via the questionnaire. Comparisons were then undertaken between the data from these two sources. The three key issues were related to the participants’ pronunciation competence displayed through pronunciation errors (scores) in the pronunciation test. The analysis investigated whether or not these issues influenced the participants’ intelligibility and how much they affected it. The comparison and contrasting happened in pairs (e.g. lack of communication instruction versus communication instruction) based on the statistical values calculated using SPSS software and statistical formulas. For instance, to consider whether pronunciation instruction or lack of it could affect the participants’ intelligibility, the pronunciation errors of the students who received pronunciation instruction would be compared to those of the students without pronunciation instruction. The analysis was also supported by charts, tables, diagrams and graphs.

3.2 Pronunciation and oral communication instruction as a cause of the students’ low intelligibility

As described in the methodology, this section aims at justifying the assumption and hypothesis as follows:
- Students have not been taught pronunciation in the classroom and therefore they have not gained awareness of phonology, making their pronunciation unintelligible.
- The more English practice and oral communication has been taught in the classroom, the fewer errors are made in speech production.

The data collected from the questionnaire are presented in Table 3 (Appendix 5, p. 157). The outcomes are outlined in Figure 14 (pie-chart) and in Table 22 below.

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 9. Summary of the outcomes of the questionnaire data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronunciation instruction and pronunciation assessment applied</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of pronunciation taught to 18 out of 50 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students received pronunciation instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pronunciation assessment was made with the writing-based tests as part of grammar for only 10 out of the 50 participants.**
3.2.1 Lack of pronunciation instruction

The assumption raised in the discussion of the research problem, and in the literature review is that a majority of Vietnamese adult EFL students are not taught pronunciation, and in the few cases when pronunciation is taught, individual sounds (segmental elements) are the main focus. Figure 14 illustrates that 32 out of the 50 participants (64 percent) had not received pronunciation instruction at all, and Table 15 above shows that 10 out of the remaining 18 participants were instructed on individual sounds only. Four of the eight were, in addition to instruction on individual sounds, requested to pronounce new words including stressed syllables after modelling by their teacher. Only the other four participants (eight percent), had received pronunciation instruction which included intonation or connected speech. In summary, the data point out that suprasegmental elements were mostly ignored in pronunciation instruction. This has been strongly supported by the findings gained from the analysis of the qualitative data (see section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, pp. 117-118).

Thus, the neglect of syllable structures, intonation, rhythm in pronunciation instruction could give rise to the students’ weaknesses in pronunciation shown in pronunciation errors above. Little attention paid to the teaching of pronunciation beyond individual sounds particularly, syllable structures, provides a cause for the students’ syllable errors in pronunciation. The data from Table 15 also illustrate that pronunciation instruction had all been based on a teacher model in which local teachers acted as a speech coach without using any teaching aids such as tape recorders or videos, limiting the chance for the students to improve their pronunciation.

3.2.2 Lack of oral communication instruction

The issue discussed in Chapter one is that oral communication instruction is also overlooked both at high school and tertiary education in Vietnam. This is realized by the data from Table
15 and Figure 9 which show that 32 out of the 50 participants had not received oral communication instruction at all, while the other 18 had little chance to speak English with their teacher because of very large class sizes with 50 or more students and very limited class-time. The overcrowding and limited time are also mentioned in the qualitative data gained from the interviews of students and teachers and analysed below.

3.3 Lack of practice and exposure to authentic language as the main cause of unintelligibility

In this section, the presentation of the results and findings focuses on validating the hypothesis that the more English has been used in practice, the fewer errors are made in speech production in the pronunciation test.

3.3.1 Lack of pronunciation practice

Figure 10 below shows that 23 out of the 50 informants (46 percent of the sample) had not practised pronunciation at all, compared to 27 students who had. To test whether or not pronunciation practice is a main factor in determining the participants’ pronunciation competence, a statistical comparison needs to be made between the errors made by 23 students without pronunciation practices and those made by the other 27 students who practised pronunciation. Based on the SPSS program, the t-test value was ascertained by determining whether or not there was a statistical difference between the pronunciation errors of these two groups.
Figure 10. Students practised their English pronunciation versus students did not

To verify this, the calculation of the probability of this t-test value for these two groups was carried out using SPSS is 0.042, less than the significant level of 0.05. Therefore it be drawn that there is statistical difference between students without practice and those who practised their pronunciation outside class. This indicates that pronunciation practice makes the participant’s pronunciation competence somehow different from no pronunciation practice. In other words, pronunciation practice can be a factor in improving the participants’ pronunciation, suggesting that lack of pronunciation practice could be considered as a contributing factor in the students’ low pronunciation competence.

3.3.2 No oral communication and oral communication

Figure 11 shows that 31 out of the 50 participants (accounting for 62 percent of the sample) did not practice their oral communication outside class compared to 18 students who did, suggesting that most of them have serious pronunciation problems due to their insufficient verbal interaction. Such problems can be ascertained by the fact that most of those who made the highest number of pronunciation errors do not habitually engage in verbal interactions outside the classroom. To support this view, a comparison on errors was made between a group of 18 students who practised oral communication and a group of 18 students who were randomly selected from the 31 ‘no oral communication’ students. The comparison is based on the error bar plot of mean and t-test.
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

Below are the statistical values gained from SPSS on which the analysis is based.

Table 16

Samples t-test on oral errors and random no oral errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical Values</th>
<th>Oral error group</th>
<th>Random-no oral error group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>203.0000</td>
<td>255.8889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
<td>42.8114</td>
<td>43.3364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std.error Mean</td>
<td>10.09076</td>
<td>10.22117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value (sig. 2tailed)</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who had no oral communication made pronunciation errors at a somewhat higher frequency than those who did for the following reasons. Firstly, Figure 12 shows that the two groups do differ, as their error bars do not overlap at all, very strongly indicating that the two sample means are likely to be estimating two different population means. Secondly, Table 16 above shows that the two-tailed p-value of the t-test for these two group means is 0.0008, much less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that oral communication applied can improve the participants’ achievement in this study, indicating that insufficient verbal communication could affect the speakers’ English speech intelligibility.
Figure 12. Error bars of two standard error distance

Note: Error bars extend to a two standard error distance either side of each mean

3.3.3 Improper pronunciation practice outside class

Lack of practice and exposure to authentic language is also reflected through the students’ improper pronunciation practice outside class, accounting for their weaknesses in pronunciation. What and how they had practised their English pronunciation outside the classroom has been summarised in Table 17 below.

Table 17

27 students’ strategies and time for pronunciation practice and practice frequency and time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ errors</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practise new words with the help of dictionary, then read a text or conversation by oneself</td>
<td>Practise new words with the help of dictionary</td>
<td>All means (audios, English movies or English news on television or videos)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>208</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>265</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 11</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 12</td>
<td>245</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 13</td>
<td>223</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 14</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 16</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 20</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 25</td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 26</td>
<td>278</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 28</td>
<td>229</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 31</td>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 presents the strategies students used in practising their English pronunciation. It reveals that nine out of the 27 practised pronouncing new words or phrases by themselves with the help of a dictionary, while the other 15 students spent more time in reading a text or a conversation (formatted as a written text) on their own after pronouncing new words and phrases from the text. In other words, 25 students, or 92.6 percent (of 27) utilized a dictionary as a medium to improve their English pronunciation on their own without any tutors or any other audio and visual tools compared with the other two students who used technological tools such as audio-recorders, videos and television to improve their English pronunciation at
home. This indicates that most of the students learned new words assuming what their proper pronunciation might be, without exposure to authentic speech or correction and instruction. Their unawareness of the mechanism for pronouncing new words is also revealed by the data gained from the question related to pronunciation correction showing that 42 students responded with ‘no’ to question 8 which asks “Were pronunciation mistakes corrected by the teacher?” in the questionnaire (see Appendix 4, p.151) while all the 18 responses from those who received pronunciation instruction indicate that the participants pronounced new words only by imitating their teachers. This implies that the students did not know how to produce them accurately. This is in line with the finding of Bui (2006), who claimed that “[s]tudents could not produce the correct pronunciation of words since few teachers explained to them the mechanism of producing sounds” (p. 3). Learning decontextualized words can account for the reasons why the informants have serious pronunciation problems in terms of syllable structure and rhythm as analysed above.

3.4 Why are pronunciation and oral communication not explicitly taught

3.4.1 No pronunciation assessment in the curriculum

The fact is that the neglect of teaching pronunciation in Vietnamese adult EFL learners both at high school and university level chiefly originates from the assessment practices in these educational institutions. English learners’ competence is measured based on a grammar or writing test as described in Chapter 1, p. 3 with no attention paid to pronunciation. This is also discussed by Bui (2006), who claimed that:

The textbooks cover four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, at the end of each semester, students are assessed based on a written test of reading and writing skills only. As a result, many students and even teachers are examination oriented. (p. 3)
The pronunciation and oral communication instruction are not a priority in the Vietnamese curriculum because the assessment of students’ English competence practices has never been changed.

The data in Table 22 show that 80 percent of the participants responded to the question about pronunciation assessment with no. The other ten students revealed that pronunciation features were only judged as part of grammar in a grammar-based test, which focused on discriminating individual sounds and stressed syllables. All of these points indicate that the participants’ weaknesses in English pronunciation are due to the insufficient concern with pronunciation assessment which accounts for learning and teaching focusing on the writing examinations.

3.4.2 Pronunciation assessment as a potential factor for pronunciation improvement

As mentioned above, pronunciation and oral communication is not a priority in the participants’ curriculum. However, pronunciation assessment can be a potential factor in improving the participants’ intelligibility, despite their pronunciation competence being assessed in writing-based tests in which pronunciation is treated as part of grammar. This is reflected in the significantly lower error rates of ten students whose pronunciation knowledge was measured, compared with the other students who had no pronunciation assessment. The scores (errors) in Table 18 show that the data points of this group are distant from the mean of 224 of the 50 students’ errors (see Figure 6, p. 64 and Appendix 2, p. 147). It can be seen from Table 18 below that six of the ten (group 2) belong to the ten with the lowest number of errors. Additionally, the errors of this experimental group compared to the lowest number of errors of the conditional group (called group 1: ten students made the least number of errors in the pronunciation test) are nearly the same. This is demonstrated by the p-value, 0.156 computed from the t-test value of -1.547, larger than the significant level of 0.05, indicating the null-hypothesis cannot be rejected. That is, there is no difference in mean between these
two groups. In other words, the pronunciation errors of these groups do not vary significantly. This suggests that those whose pronunciation competence was measured have almost the fewest errors in the pronunciation test, partially accounting for the very large range (171) between the highest number of pronunciation errors (309) and the lowest number of pronunciation errors (138) and substantial standard deviation showing that the data points are very far from the mean, as previously mentioned in this chapter (see Table 7, p. 62).

Based on evidence in this study, it can be seen that pronunciation assessment as part of the curriculum could become an important factor in contributing to the participants’ increased speech intelligibility as it could stimulate the learners and teachers to focus on pronunciation aspects in instruction and practice. This was clearly revealed in the questionnaire data. All ten students whose pronunciation knowledge was judged as part of grammar in examinations were involved in pronunciation practice and verbal communication outside class. Therefore, it can be concluded that pronunciation assessment increases students’ motivation to improve their pronunciation, thereby reducing the unintelligibility of their speech. This is largely because those whose pronunciation competence was assessed were engaged in pronunciation practice and verbal communication. This is also in accordance with the finding from the teachers’ interview that those who have more opportunities to practice English with their teachers in the classroom and outside the classroom have attained better pronunciation.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>138</td>
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<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>140</td>
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<td>147</td>
<td>153</td>
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<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Summary of the findings

In general, it can be said that some findings in this study support the assumptions and hypotheses posed in the literature review and research methodology. Below is the summary of the findings.

The first finding is that insufficient pronunciation teaching is a major cause for the participants’ unintelligibility in the pronunciation test. It could be concluded that inadequate instruction on pronunciation features beyond individual sounds particularly syllable structures is also treated as a cause for the students’ syllable errors. Additionally, lack of opportunities for oral communication is considered as a cause for the participants’ low intelligibility because many of them had little chance to use the language actively and speak English with their teachers or other English speakers.

The most interesting finding in this study is that pronunciation assessment can be regarded as a potential factor in improving the participants’ speech intelligibility. Even though the students’ pronunciation competence was measured as part of grammar and not made a separate focus, those students whose pronunciation competence was assessed had better results in the pronunciation test than the others. Therefore, a conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis results is that pronunciation assessment is a strong motivator for students to work on improving their pronunciation through practice and oral communication. It is also a strong motivator for teachers to teach it explicitly and create opportunities for learners to use the language more actively. It needs to be pointed, however, out that even those who spent
time in practising pronunciation and verbal communication still had low speech intelligibility as found in the pronunciation data. This can be explained by students’ lack of phonological awareness and lack of good speech models. Another reason might also be the fact that their pronunciation practice mainly involved segmental elements only, and was based on self-study without using any pronunciation media such as audios and videos. This limited their pronunciation improvement both in terms of segmental and suprasegmental features particularly, syllable structures.

4. INTERPRETATION OF TEACHERS’ INTERVIEWS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the interpretation of teacher interviews through the identification of themes, and with Discourse Analysis (DA) techniques. It aims to verify through additional research the following points: first, to establish that the teachers who were chosen for the interviews are the right subjects, and were able to provide trustworthy information for this study; second, to gain additional data for triangulation in order to increase the validity of the findings in relation to the main research question ‘Why is the investigated cohort of Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ intelligibility so low?’ as shown in the findings from the analysis of the pronunciation test data (errors); and third, to find further rich data and reasons for the participants’ weaknesses in their English pronunciation that the questionnaire could not cover. All these issues were investigated through four themes: social context; students’ oral and pronunciation competence; problems lecturers have in their pronunciation instruction; and pronunciation pedagogy. Table 19 below is a summary of the findings according to the themes lined up above and gained from the four interview transcripts (see Appendix 6, p. 157).

4.2 Theme-based analysis and DA

4.2.1 Theme-based analysis
The assumption was that some reality – knowledge, beliefs, stories and perspectives – pre-existed before the interview. This approach provides for a coding-based analysis of ideas and themes in the interview transcripts (Baker and Johnson, 1998). In other words, the use of themes is one of the ways to analyse qualitative data (Creswell, 2008, p. 256). By listening to the interaction and reading the transcripts, chunking the data, categorizing them, moving them around and rearranging them (Silverman, 2004); through initial data analyses; and through the elimination of redundancies, four major themes were recognized in these interviews: social context and interviewees; students’ oral and pronunciation competence; what aspects of pronunciation were taught and how they were instructed; and problems teachers had faced in pronunciation instruction. DA techniques were used to analyse the data and classify within the identified themes. The results are summarised in Table 19

4.2.2 DA and thematic analysis

Discourse Analysis is a way of understanding social interactions. There are various forms of discourse analysis. However, this study focuses on using themes to analyse the interview texts. Therefore, the interview talks (transcripts) were read with care using skimming and scanning skills for this purpose. Four major themes were identified and classified. In DA, language plays an important role in understanding what is socially constructed. As Volosinov (1986) states, “language is an indispensable part of the subject’s self-understanding, since words are present in every act of interpretation” (as cited in Talja, 1999, p. 12). The four core themes were explored to support the investigation into why the Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility is low particularly at syllable level. This was done on the basis of analysis of each theme as a result of coding the language in the interviews which helped to identify the ways which the interviewees constructed their own version of reality about their students’ English background with a focus on their pronunciation competence and pronunciation learning and teaching issues. Additionally, qualitative researchers frequently
demonstrate their findings visually by using figures or pictures that enhance the discussion. Creating a comparison table is one of the different ways to display the findings as Creswell (2008) claimed that creating a comparison table that compared groups on one of the themes helped augment the findings. Therefore, the findings are also summarised using a comparison table below.

4.3 Summary of main points from the four transcripts

Table 19

Outline of findings from the teacher interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>LECTURER 1</th>
<th>LECTURER 2</th>
<th>LECTURER 3</th>
<th>LECTURER 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social context</td>
<td>In charge of students' speaking skill</td>
<td>In charge of students' listening skills (turn 12)</td>
<td>In charge of students' speaking and reading skills (turn 11, 31 &amp; 175)</td>
<td>In charge of General linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 years' experience in teaching English</td>
<td>Nearly 3 years' experience in teaching English (turn 12)</td>
<td>Several months' experience in teaching English (turn 7)</td>
<td>Nine years’ experience in teaching English (turn 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In charge of speaking skills for students from another university (turn 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particulars about students</td>
<td>Being trained to be teachers of English</td>
<td>Seven years in learning English (turn 16 &amp; 18)</td>
<td>Being trained to be teachers of English, interpreters, translators or for business purposes (turn 7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining very high level in entrance exams, grammar and reading multiple-choice question exam</td>
<td>The number of students: 50 (turn 82) different cities (turn 80)</td>
<td>Age: 18-19 (turn 7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The number of students: 50 or 60 (turn 90) from different cities (turns 8 and 56)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The number of students: 61 from different cities (turn 11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' oral and pronunciation competence</td>
<td>Those who come from Ho Chi Minh City are good (turn 8)</td>
<td>Good (turn 18, 19 &amp; 22)</td>
<td>Good for Saigonese students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not good for those who come from other provinces (turn 11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saigonese students are often better than other students (turn 52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to foreigners</td>
<td>Sometimes have chance (turn 18)</td>
<td>Little chance, very rare (turns 44, 66 &amp; 72)</td>
<td>Not much chance (turn 33 and 123)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shy to talk to foreigners</td>
<td>They can’t communicate with foreigners (turn 74)</td>
<td>Students who study here do not have much chance to talk, communicate with foreigners. (turn 33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A few of them are active to talk to foreigners outside university. (turn 14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy of English Department</td>
<td>Teaching staff: all of us are Vietnamese (turn 18)</td>
<td>Teaching staff: All the classes are conducted by Vietnamese teachers and on time for foreign teachers (turn 74)</td>
<td>Teaching staff: We don’t have a foreign teacher right now. (turn 123)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exchange program for students: foreign teachers sometimes come and attend class (turns 18 &amp; 32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching staff: Foreign teachers are teaching English at foreign school or centers. (turn 60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggestions: we should provide more chance for foreigners coming here. (turn 56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problems lecturers had faced in their pronunciation instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Aspects of pronunciation currently taught and how they were taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowded class: 50 or 60 students (turn 96)</td>
<td>Vowels, consonants and clusters (136 &amp; 142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different regional background: Shy (students from other provinces) those who come from Saigon are active</td>
<td>They are encouraged to produce unfamiliar sounds by imitating them after the recording (turns 58, 76 and 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time: one period (turn 96)</td>
<td>Vowels, consonants, clusters, intonation and sentence stress (turns 34, 46 and 118-120): I combine the two, but I usually pay more attention to pronunciation of vowels and consonants. (turn 124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ pronunciation is not sharpened enough (turn 56)</td>
<td>Group work: ask their friends for help. (turn 96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big class: 50 students in my class (turn 82): we cannot care for individual students. So it is difficult to correct their pronunciation mistakes. (turn 88)</td>
<td>Vowels, consonants, with a focus on Final sounds (turn 95): I pay attention to vowels. They make a lot of mistakes of vowels, clusters, minimal pairs and stress, sentence stress and word stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different regional background: those who come from Saigon are active and from other provinces are shy (turn 80)</td>
<td>Role play: game focusing in consonants and vowels and intonation (turns 147-149)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class is very big: 61 students (turn 36): noisy, cannot pay attention to all (turn 44)</td>
<td>Teachers move around and correct mistakes (particularly individual sounds) (turns 77-92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different regional background: half from Saigon Half from other provinces are so shy (turn 11)</td>
<td>Theory about sounds: vowels and consonants, basic rules on assimilation, intonation and connected sounds (turns 24-26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time: two periods (= 90 minutes) for each class every week (turn 35, 37): we do not have much time to practise speaking English. (turn 33): we don’t have time (turn 153)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huge class (turn 42): over 50 students (turns 44 &amp; 48)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different regional background: they are shy and they come from other cities or other provinces (turn 34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time: To be honest, I have no time to pay attention to other pronunciation mistakes such as intonation or rhythm. (turn 68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Social context

Descriptions of social settings through a representational view of language are part of DA. This is a good way of investigating exteriors of an interaction. As Alasuutari (1995) stated, “the analysis concentrates on the contents of interview answers, which reveal something about phenomena or processes occurring either in participants’ inner realities or in external reality” (as cited in Talja, 1999, p. 12). The four interview transcripts were therefore read for information regarding a current social setting which the interviewees are associated with. All of the information has been outlined in Table 19 detailing who students and lecturers were and what they were doing in a specific context through relevant turn-taking. In other words, these turns can transport readers to the setting so that they can almost feel the situation.

These turns associated with this theme (social context) evidence that the English program aims at training the students to be teachers of English with a focus on improving the four macroskills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and that the four lecturers are currently teaching speaking, listening and general linguistics related to pronunciation.
instruction in a classroom of 50-60 first-year students who come from diverse regional backgrounds. In addition, it can be realized that all the students have experienced seven years in learning English. One more detail needs to be noted, namely that the students gained a very high level in the entrance multiple-choice grammar-reading-based exam, indicating that their English is at a high level in grammar and reading skills. These details are evidence that both the lecturers and students are the right subjects for this research. Therefore, it can be postulated that they have provided essential and trustworthy information for the study.

4.5 Students’ oral and pronunciation competence

The findings from the pronunciation data analysis show that all of the participants are weak in pronunciation, matching the most experienced teacher’s comment that their pronunciation is not good in general. The reason for this is partially revealed by the data from Table 19: that they had very few opportunities to communicate with foreign teachers and they were shy about talking to foreigners. This is true for two reasons. Firstly, all the four interviewees stated that their English instruction had been conducted by Vietnamese teachers only, indicating that there were no foreign teachers of English who were part of English instruction. In other words, the data suggest that the English department leaders or university leaders have no policy for appointing foreign teachers in their English teacher-training program. This is ascertained by lecturer 2, who claimed, “There is no time for foreign teachers” (turn 74). It is also supported by the statement made by lecturer 3, “We don’t have a foreign teacher right now.” (turn 33). Interestingly, the detail in turns 18 and 32 of the interview transcript of lecturer 1 seems to indicate that there is an exchange program for students in which foreigners came in and joined his class. However, the ‘sometimes’ is vague in its meaning. Therefore, the researcher applied probes to obtain additional information about it demonstrated in turns 25-28 as follows:

25 R: [What] do you mean by sometimes. I want you to clarify
It is evident that the lecturer was not sure about this, indicating that the policy for foreign teachers as part of the English department’s English teachers-training program was not widely known. This situation is backed up in turn 12 of the interview transcript of lecturer 4, the most experienced teacher, in which they acknowledge that there had been only one foreign teacher from Belgium who did not teach English but observed his class. Therefore, it is safe to assume that no foreign teachers of English took part in training the students to be teachers of English. Secondly, although there were other opportunities for students to engage in verbal communications with foreigners outside class, few of them actually talked to foreigners as stated by the most experienced lecturer in turn 14. This is reinforced by lecturer 2 who said in turn 74 that students cannot communicate with foreigners. Therefore, it can be concluded that lack of practice and exposure to authentic language (no foreign teachers nor foreigners outside class) is one of the factors in determining the participants’ low speech intelligibility. This is largely because the students’ pronunciation could not be improved through communication in English with their Vietnamese teachers and their classmates in the classroom. As Dang (2004) suggested “[b]adly trained and badly paid teachers result in poor teaching methods, improper pronunciation and a lack in teacher motivation.” (p. 68), especially as their classmates’ pronunciation competence was not considered as a good model.
Communication plays an important role in the enhancement of L2 learners’ pronunciation skills. As Cohen (1977) argued, pronunciation instruction goes far beyond the teaching of phonemes, and should have an emphasis on meaningful communication along with Morley's premise (1991) that, "[i]ntelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence" (as cited in Robertson, 2003, p.7). Otlowski (1998) also supported this view by saying that pronunciation must be seen as a crucial part of communication.

A new finding from the data in Table 19 is that all the four lecturers agree that students who came from Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) had better pronunciation than those from other cities or provinces. Whether or not such a difference can give rise to a significant difference in the pronunciation competence between HCMC students and the others is not known because it was not explicitly investigated and it is not the subject of this study.

4.6 What pronunciation aspects are taught and how they are currently taught.

It was argued in Chapter one that students have pronunciation problems due to their own lack of awareness of pronunciation problems, particularly relating to suprasegmental features since instruction was concentrated on the mastery of segmentals. This assumption is confirmed by the data displayed in Table 19 that the current instruction conducted by the lecturers mostly focused on segmental elements only. The data below show that the pronunciation pedagogy as generally applied in Vietnam centred on the improvement of the students’ pronunciation at segmental level, while consideration of suprasegmental features was no priority at all for most. This can be realized in turns 136 and 142 of lecturer 1’s interview transcription that evidences that consonants, vowels and clusters were the main foci in his lecture. He further stated in turns 58, 76 and 84 that his students were encouraged to produce unfamiliar sounds by imitating them after the recordings. This emphasis on the segmental features is also identified by lecturer 2 in turn 124: “I combine the two (segmental and suprasegmental features), but I usually pay more attention to the pronunciation of vowels and consonants”.
Lecturer 3, in turn 95 focused on final sounds and vowels although she also paid attention to stress and sentence stress in her pronunciation instruction. Lecturer 4 provided the students with theory about sounds, vowels, consonants and suprasegmental elements.

A similar situation appears to occur during English speaking practice, too. For instance, lecturer 3 used language games such as role play to encourage her students to improve their segmental aspects rather than suprasegmental aspects in spite of intonation also being part of their practice activities, as reflected in the following comments.

145  I:  *because I, we meet only two periods*. During the periods, we have a lot of things for pronunciation we learn ....sometimes I let them play games. In some games, it lasts about 20 minutes, half an hour or even 40 minutes. So, *pronunciation games*. I’d love to, I’d love to let them listen to sounds English because they talk less....

146  R:  *yeah, return to pronunciation game. What aspects of pronunciation do you focus on in the pronunciation games?*

147  I:  *so far, I let them play pronunciation games focusing on consonants and [vowels]*

148  R:  *[vowels]*

149  I:  *intonation for tag questions*

Additionally, the focus on the segmental features and insufficient attention to suprasegmental features during the practice section is clearly displayed in the approach to correction of the students’ pronunciation mistakes. Turn 77 from transcript 3 shows that the teacher moved around and corrected her students’ mistakes, particularly the individual sounds. This is supported in interview transcript 2 in that the lecturer used group work from which the students’ pronunciation was improved by peers in their group by asking their friends for help
(shown in turn 96), indicating that he did not recognize many of his students’ pronunciation mistakes. In other words, their pronunciation could not be improved in this way.

One more detail needs to be noted: that the suprasegmental features that were taught did not include syllable structures, one of the main factors in determining the informants’ low speech intelligibility, as argued in Chapter 3 in the quantitative data analysis.

It is safe to claim, therefore, that the pronunciation instruction centred on the individual sounds (segmental elements) more than suprasegmental features, which is one of the reasons for rendering the students’ speech unintelligible. This strongly supports the findings revealed by the questionnaire data analysis above.

4.7 Problems teachers have faced in improving their students’ pronunciation

In addition to the lack of exposure to foreigners or foreign teachers and insufficient attention to suprasegmental features, a large class size, limited time for English instruction and regional background are considered as the other three main reasons for limitations in the improvement of the participants’ pronunciation, leading to the low speech intelligibility. These are the additional findings as summarized in Table 19.

Firstly, a class which consists of 50 or 60 students is too overcrowded for teachers to pay close attention to their students, limiting the improvement in individual students’ pronunciation. This is shown in turn 96 in the interview transcript of lecturer 1, “We have a big problem because I cannot stretch my attention to all of them.” This is also reinforced by lecturer 2 and lecturer 3 in turn 82 and turn 44 respectively, as displayed in Table 19.

Secondly, the data from Table 19 show that two periods of 90 minutes for each class per week are too limited for 50 or 60 students to practice their English speaking. Such limited time per week for each subject is really a problem, which is confirmed by lecturer 3, who said, “We do not have much time to practice speaking English. We don’t have time.” (turns 33 and 153). Lecturer 1 shared this problem, which is revealed by the following turn in the interview
transcript of lecturer 1, (in charge of speaking subject) “I just pick up a maximum about 30 students at one period. I mean, at one class.”

Both large class size and time limit are considered as factors in limiting the students’ pronunciation improvement in terms of recognition and correction of their mistakes. This is reflected by the following turns from the transcript 3:

42 R: about or over?
43 I: actually, 61 he he
44 R: yes, exactly number. And do you think the crowded class is a problem for you in your lecture in order to take care of all the members in the class?
45 I: Uh I cannot take care of all, I cannot control all. Sometimes, they. they move around and talk. I cannot control them because it’s too big, they talk at the same time. So very noisy. Some of them speak Vietnamese instead. I cannot pay attention to all of them. I cannot check. So, I move around and give a warning when I heard some Vietnamese. I also, when we practice role place and I want to ask some pairers to come to the front of the class and …out…it’s very difficult because I cannot ask a lot of pairers, just some pairers in the class big like this. A lot of students do not have a chance to come to the front and they have to listen to their friends most of the time…..
87 I [I] let the whole class pay attention to the mistakes and correct together with other students.

Like lecturer 3, lecturer 1 also utilized peer correction of pronunciation mistakes during English practice, indicating that students’ pronunciation could not be improved in this way because their knowledge and experience in pronunciation was restricted. In turn 98 the interview subject stated his resignation and doubts whether this is a good solution for a large class: ‘yeah, I think. I come up with a solution that a pairwork, teamwork, they can correct
with each other about, I mean, the sounds. However, I’m not sure whether it can be effective or not. I think, it is the best way we can, I can do in solution of a big classroom like that”.

Finally, it can be said that diverse regional background of students is another problem, particularly when they come from other cities or provinces outside Ho Chi Minh City. It may be that there is a big gap between HCMC students and those who come from other cities or provinces: that HCMC students were active and their pronunciation was better according to the lecturers’ comments (see Table 19) while the other students were shy and their pronunciation was weaker. The fourth theme in Table 19 shows that all the lecturers had trouble in supporting the pronunciation of those who came from other cities or provinces because they were shy about speaking English. This can be seen in turns 52 and 53 from the interview transcript of lecturer 1: “Some of them are shy…so, ah problem sometimes you see. They, they, some of them I mean quite not confident about that they can speak with teachers. Some of them especially, who come from the rural area(s).”. This is also confirmed in turn 88, turn 11 and turn 34 of transcript 2, transcript 3 and transcript 4 respectively displayed in Table 19. All in all, students from other cities appear to have fewer opportunities to use their English and interact in English with their teachers than those who came from Ho Chi Minh City. This suggests that their pronunciation improvement is more restricted because their pronunciation mistakes have little chance of being corrected by their teachers. This could account for all the lecturers’ comments that HCMC students’ pronunciation is better than the pronunciation of those who came from other cities. This is an unexpected additional finding of this research.

4.8 Conclusion

The interview findings underpin and support most of the questionnaire data findings. The first is that lack of exposure to foreigners both inside and outside the classroom is one of the factors in determining the participants’ low speech intelligibility. The second is that the
pronunciation instruction was concentrated on the individual sounds (segmental elements) more than syllable structure and other suprasegmental features.

In addition, a huge class size and limited class time for the teaching of English result in a restriction in the improvement of the participant’s pronunciation because they have little chance to apply their English in practice and little chance for their mistakes to be corrected by their teachers.

5. **PRESENTATION OF STUDENTS’ INTERVIEWS**

Like the teachers’ interview analysis method, themes were also applied to analyse the database of the student interviews. This was important in terms of reinforcement and validity checking of the findings. There are four main themes which were investigated: the main goals of the high school English curriculum, pronunciation aspects taught previously and currently, amount of exposure, and limitations for English pronunciation improvement. The major information regarding these themes is summarized in Table 20. In some cases, the analysis was also illustrated with some specific turns in the transcriptions.

5.1 **Introduction**

This section focuses on presenting the findings attained from the analysis of the independent interviews conducted between the researcher and ten students. They all centre on answering the research question, “why do the investigated cohort of Vietnamese students have a serious pronunciation problem?” These findings are generally similar to those from the analysis of the teachers’ interviews and questionnaire as discussed above. The findings are presented on the basis of the four main themes displayed in Table 20 below. The report begins with the presentation of the first finding that the students’ communicative competence is weak because pronunciation instruction was not the primary purpose in high school curricula. It is followed by the interpretation of the second finding that lack of pronunciation instruction both at high school and tertiary level, particularly about suprasegmental aspects, is considered as a main
cause of poor pronunciation. This reinforces what has been found in the analysis of the questionnaire and teachers’ interviews. The presentation continues with the third finding that insufficient opportunities to apply their English in communication with Vietnamese teachers of English or their classmates and with foreigners is also recognized as another main factor in determining the participants’ weaknesses in pronunciation. This also verifies the findings reflected in the questionnaire and the teachers’ interviews. Additional findings are that class time limit and a large class size have a negative impact on improvement of students’ pronunciation competence. Finally, this section ends with a summary of the findings.

Table 20 below summarises the main points from the interview transcripts.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S*</th>
<th>Main Goals of high school curricular</th>
<th>Pronunciation taught previously</th>
<th>Pronunciation taught currently</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
<th>Limitations for pronunciation improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grammar and reading</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Vowels, consonants and cluster</td>
<td>Every day in groups but sometimes to teacher</td>
<td>Rarely, one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Vowels, consonants and stress</td>
<td>Sometimes in groups and to teachers</td>
<td>three times but simple sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Not much Vowels, consonants and stress (as grammar)</td>
<td>Majors: Vowels, consonants and stress Minor: intonation</td>
<td>Two or three times but simple sentences</td>
<td>Little chance to have their mistakes corrected by teacher No foreign teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Pronouncing new words after teachers without explanation</td>
<td>Majors: Vowels, consonants and stress Minor: intonation and intonation and</td>
<td>Little chance to talk to teachers</td>
<td>No time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Majors: Vowels, consonants and stress Minor: intonation</td>
<td>One time</td>
<td>Mistakes are corrected in speaking classes rather than in other subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Consonants, vowels and clusters</td>
<td>Little chance to talk to teachers</td>
<td>Two times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Yes, stress, intonation, vowels and consonants but not much</td>
<td>Majors: Vowels, consonants and clusters Minor: intonation and sentence stress</td>
<td>chance to talk to teachers and classmates</td>
<td>many times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Pronouncing new words after</td>
<td>Majors: Vowels, consonants clusters</td>
<td>Little chance to speak English in</td>
<td>No time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>teachers without explanations</th>
<th>Minor: intonation</th>
<th>class</th>
<th>and writing class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Consonants and vowels</td>
<td>One time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Consonants, vowels and clusters</td>
<td>several times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S* = students

5.2 Main goals of the high school curriculum as a cause for the participants’ low speech production.

The main goals of the high school English curriculum do not include English pronunciation instruction and this could be one of the major causes for the participants’ weaknesses in pronunciation. This is clearly reflected by the information provided by the ten students in the interviews in Table 20 which identifies grammar and reading as the two main skills the students were exposed to. The finding supports the assumption made in Chapter one by Dang (2006) that after leaving high school and moving on to university, many students’ communicative competence is too low because at high schools, grammar and reading are the main foci while pronunciation instruction is not a major focus in the English syllabus for high school students (from year 6 to year 12).

5.3 Pronunciation instruction as a problem

5.3.1 Previous pronunciation instruction

Pronunciation is taught in English classes in spite of the fact that it is not a major objective in the English syllabus. As revealed by the questionnaires and teacher interviews, it was also found in the student interviews that this instruction is very restricted and centres on the mastery of segmental elements rather than connected speech or prosodics. This is realised by the information displayed in Table 20 where six out of the ten interviewees described that pronunciation instruction was mainly associated with individual sounds, while the four remaining students said that pronunciation was not taught at all. Strikingly, five of the six
students explained that pronunciation was taught to them based on teacher imitation where they were asked to pronounce new words including individual sounds and stressed word syllables after their teachers without any explanation about how to produce them. It can be seen from the data in this table that suprasegmental elements were ignored although word stressed syllables (part of suprasegmental features) were mentioned in the production of new words. Nevertheless, the students were not aware of this suprasegmental aspect because they were not shown by their teachers how to produce them. All of the data suggest that their speech production is unintelligible due to their own lack of awareness of this phonological aspect of language.

5.3.2 Current pronunciation instruction

The current pronunciation instruction could be considered as a cause for limiting the development of the students’ pronunciation skills because the instruction also followed the same tendency: the emphasis on the mastery of segmental elements and insufficient attention to suprasegmental features. This is shown by the data from Table 20, which shows that half of the ten informants stated that only individual sounds and word syllable stress were involved in the instruction, while intonation and sentence stress were treated as a lesser priority for the others. All of this suggests that the current pronunciation instruction concentrating on individual sounds rather than suprasegmental elements is also a main factor in determining the participants’ low speech production, supporting the emergent findings from the analysis of the teachers’ interviews.

5.4 Exposure to the target language

5.4.1 Current English practice in the classroom

As found in the analysis of the teachers’ interviews, the limitation in enhancement of the students’ pronunciation skills is partially due to a ‘no-foreign teacher’ policy, implying that students do not have actual experience to develop their pronunciation skills through verbal
communication with foreign teachers. Once again, this information can be ascertained from the ten students interviewed, as illustrated in Table 20. However, lack of English speaking practice with their teachers in the current English teaching pedagogy is also another reason for their weaknesses in pronunciation. It is evidenced by the data from this table that nine of the ten interviewees had little chance to talk English with their teachers with the exception of one student who did have an opportunity to do so. In other words, these students had no chance to improve their pronunciation through practice. Consequently, their pronunciation mistakes were not recognized and corrected by their teachers who struggled to teach in huge classes with limited class time which made it impossible to take care of all the students as identified in the analysis of the teachers’ interviews.

5.4.2 Lack of contact with foreigners

The findings gained from the questionnaire data and the teachers’ interview data analysis show that insufficient English oral contact with foreigners is one of the factors in making the informants’ speech production unintelligible. Such a finding is reinforced by the data from Table 20 which shows that the students had hardly any contact with foreigners. In fact, the insufficient verbal communication with foreigners outside class is revealed by the information provided by two of the ten interviewees, namely that they had not communicated with foreigners yet, while six of them said that they had spoken English only when using simple sentences such as “How are you?”,” “Where are you from?”, or something similar, and then only on one to three occasions. Only two of them had had several opportunities to talk to foreigners. In summary, the data suggest that most of the interviewed students had not had much chance to improve their pronunciation level via social contact with foreigners, which contributes to the weaknesses in their pronunciation.
5.5 Conclusion

There are three findings resulting from this section, which support what has been previously revealed by the questionnaire and the teachers’ interview data analysis. The first conclusion to be drawn is that pronunciation instruction was not regarded as a main goal of the English instruction pedagogy in high school, and that in the (few) cases when pronunciation instruction was carried out, it focused on the mastery of segments, which are currently also the first priority in tertiary level. This could have been one of the contributing factors to the low pronunciation achievement of the 50 informants in the pronunciation test, confirming what has been discussed in the previous sections. The second finding is that deficient oral communication with foreigners is another cause for the participants’ weaknesses in speech. Finally, a huge class size could be regarded as a reason for the limitation in enhancing the students’ pronunciation competence because students have little chance or limited time to speak English with their teachers, who can help them to improve their pronunciation skills by recognizing and correcting their mistakes emerging from the communication, confirming the finding from the teachers’ interview analysis.

6. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

All the findings have been outlined in Table 21 below

Table 21

*Findings to emerge from the study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation test data</td>
<td>Students have serious pronunciation problems (their speech is very unintelligible in terms of words and statements)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The study provides evidence for the impact of mother tongue on the students’ speech production through the syllable errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Questionnaire Data | The insufficient pronunciation instruction particularly in syllable structure and other suprasegmental aspects is a major cause for the students’ low pronunciation achievement, making their speech unintelligible.

The lack of practice and exposure to authentic language is one of the contributing factors to the students’ low intelligibility.

Pronunciation assessment could be a potential means to enhance the students’ pronunciation because those whose pronunciation competence was assessed, attained the lowest frequency of pronunciation errors. The findings to emerge from the study suggest that pronunciation assessment is treated as a motivation for the students to take part in practice and communication while they were taught pronunciation.

Both the application of pronunciation and oral communication... |

The application of Vietnamese open syllable structure (CV) to articulate the English close syllable structure (CVC) in poly-syllabic words and words associated with the syllable structures (CVL/M/N/K) impacted the students’ speech intelligibility.

The Vietnamese CV is also used to articulate the English CCV, reducing the informants’ speech intelligibility.

The insertion of the voiceless velar consonant /k/ and the deletion of the second consonant of English clusters could be brought about by the transfer of Vietnamese syllable structures to the English syllable structures in the informants’ speech output. |
Instruction could help to promote the students’ pronunciation as do pronunciation practice and verbal communication.

**Teachers’ interviews data**

Confirms the first finding in the questionnaire data. In addition, the results point out that the current pronunciation instruction also focuses on the mastery of segmental features rather than suprasegmental features.

Confirms the second finding in the questionnaire data that the lack of oral communication with foreigners and foreign teachers (which could be considered authentic language) is a contributing factor to their low pronunciation achievement.

Large class size and limited class time in English instruction could restrict the enhancement of the students’ pronunciation.

**Students’ interviews data**

Confirms the findings mentioned above in the teacher interview data and questionnaire data.
CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

While engaged in searching for valid and trustworthy data for this research, I developed the triangulation design with clear explanations and discussion with the participants, both in English and in Vietnamese during face-to-face contacts, on what to do in the project and how to do it. It can be said that the data provided by the informants were informative and relevant to the research problem posed in the first chapter which is: Vietnamese adult EFL learners make errors in using their English in practice since they have a tendency to apply their first language habits to English pronunciation, which affect their speech intelligibility.

The data from the pronunciation test allowed me to determine the students’ weaknesses in pronunciation in general and at syllable level in particular. I was also able to identify how the adult students made syllable structure errors, reducing the students’ intelligibility. Meanwhile, the data from the questionnaire allowed me to explain the reasons why the students’ speech production is unintelligible and to justify the assumption and hypothesis raised in Chapter three which are:

- Students have not been taught pronunciation in the classroom and therefore they have not gained awareness of phonology, making their pronunciation unintelligible.

- The more English practice and oral communication has been taught in classroom, the fewer errors are made in speech production.

The data from the qualitative approach permitted me to confirm the results from the questionnaire data and to search for deeper understanding of why these students had such pronunciation problems.
This chapter presents a summary and discussion of the findings in relation to the study’s research questions and research objectives. Recommendations are provided for improving Vietnamese adult EFL students’ English pronunciation, especially at the syllable level. This is followed by discussion of directions for further research before presenting some limitations of the research. Finally there is a summary of the findings of this study.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the influence of Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ mother-tongue on their speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure. It centred on first-year university students, who had spent more than seven years studying English at high school and who had been taught English at tertiary level for a full semester, as their pronunciation skills were weak due to insufficient pronunciation instruction offered from high school and lack of pronunciation instruction of suprasegmental features in their tertiary level education (Bui 2006; Dang 2006).

In this research a mixed method approach was applied to examine how the students’ syllable errors impact on speech intelligibility and why their intelligibility is so low. The triangulation of the gained data has helped to provide a deeper insight of Vietnamese adult English learners’ articulation difficulties and to expand and enrich the understanding of linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese in syllable structures. The research process consisted of two parts which were simultaneously conducted. The first part comprised a pronunciation test and questionnaire for the 50 volunteer students. The data collected from the pronunciation test aimed at answering the first two research questions: Is the English speech of the investigated cohort of students unintelligible?; How does syllable structure affect the students’ intelligibility? The data from the questionnaire were used to explore the research question, why do Vietnamese speakers make so many pronunciation errors? The second part consisted of four separate interviews with four lecturers and ten independent interviews with
ten students. The data from these sources confirmed the information gained from the questionnaire. Furthermore, these data helped elucidate more reasons why students’ pronunciation was so weak.

2.1 Research question 1: Is the English speech of the investigated cohort of students unintelligible?

It was stated in Chapter one that Vietnamese adult EFL learners have serious English pronunciation problems, strongly reducing their intelligibility, as pronunciation and communication skills are not prioritized in the English instruction either in high school or in tertiary education. Such problems were also found to be the case in the current study. In this study, the findings as presented in the previous chapter showed that students’ speech production was unintelligible in the pronunciation test measured in the number of words and sentences which were omitted or wrongly transcribed by the ten raters. The data from the pronunciation test and questionnaire suggested that their intelligibility was so low because as a rule, their previous pronunciation instruction was ignored particularly at the suprasegmental level.

2.2 Research question 2: How does syllable structure affect the students’ intelligibility?

This research study has provided evidence for syllable structure errors that result from the application of Vietnamese open syllable structure (CV.CV.CV) to produce the close English syllable structure (CVC.VC.VC.) in English polysyllabic words and in single words associated with the CVL structure (L is lateral) and CVM/N/K structures. (The M, N, K represent final consonants, /m/, /n/ and /k/ and V is a diphthong.) This is because the usage of the CV structure in these cases has the potential to give rise to new words and non-English words rather than the intended words, or that clear separation between the syllables of
polysyllabic words results in unusual prosody for interlocutors. This gave rise to unusual prosody in their speech, significantly reducing the EFL speaker intelligibility.

2.3 Research question 3: Why is Vietnamese learners’ intelligibility so low?

This research question was investigated by the questionnaire data and the data from the interviews. The purpose of these data is to seek reasons for their speech production being strongly affected by pronunciation errors. The findings gained from these data suggest that little attention was paid to the teaching of English pronunciation at high school education, and furthermore, it was not explicitly taught at tertiary education. The findings pointed out that segmental features were also currently prioritized at tertiary education while suprasegmentals (including syllable structure) were insufficiently taught. A further finding the present research provided is that the students’ unintelligible speech was caused by the lack of pronunciation practice and verbal communication particularly with foreigners. The ‘amount of exposure’ factor was supported by the outcome that those who practised pronunciation and had oral contact with foreigners produced fewer pronunciation errors than the students who did not. This study also suggested that the application of pronunciation assessment could be a cause of influencing the students’ pronunciation achievement since those whose pronunciation competence was assessed via a grammar test made the fewest pronunciation errors. It implies that the application of pronunciation assessment could be a motivation for the students to improve their pronunciation, as they were engaged in spending time practising their pronunciation skills and communicating with other people.

A final finding to emerge from the analysis of the interviews is that a large class size (50 or 60 students) and limited class time (90 minutes per week) for each class reflect a paucity of opportunity for students to improve their pronunciation skills, as they had no time to practise speaking English in the classroom and their pronunciation mistakes were not known and
corrected by their teachers. This is because the teachers could not take care of all individual students’ needs in such a limited time.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objectives of the research are to promote a better understanding of Vietnamese adult English students’ articulation difficulties and to enhance understanding of linguistic differences between English and Vietnamese in respect of syllable structure. It was expected that the current study would enable some pedagogic recommendations to be made to inform and to potentially improve adult EFL learners’ pronunciation skills either for high schools or for universities. This section, therefore, aims at answering the final research question, “What are the pedagogic implications of the findings?” based on the findings of the present study. Following are, first, recommendations for which both segmental and suprasegmentals should be explicitly taught in the pronunciation instruction, and second, the recommendation that pronunciation assessment should be introduced. The third recommendation is that foreign teachers should be employed as teachers. Finally, that class sizes should be made smaller while class time should be increased.

3.1 Pronunciation should be explicitly taught

The results of this study suggested that so many pronunciation errors made the students’ speech unintelligible. They also highlighted that the lack of explicit instruction of pronunciation, not only on individual sounds but also on other pronunciation elements and the lack of pronunciation practice and verbal communication could be some of the main reasons for so many pronunciation errors. In other words, besides segmental features, suprasegmental features ought also to be a focus in pronunciation instruction, as they are assuming a more prominent place in pronunciation instruction (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996; Gibert, 1990; and Morley, 1991. Morley (1991) proposed “[t]he need for the integration of
pronunciation exercises with verbal communication, a shift from segmentals to supra-segmentals” (as cited in Robertson, 2003, p.7).

In this study, syllable structure errors affected the participants’ intelligibility. The evidence from the present research advised that the linguistic differences of syllable structures between English and Vietnamese were the major causes for the students’ low speech production. Rationally, comparisons of the syllable structure between the two languages should be applied in pronunciation instruction in order to prevent potential errors caused by first language transfer to English pronunciation. The instruction and practice should focus on producing the closed syllable words of the target language. Connected speech should also be taught in classrooms in order to improve understanding of native speakers’ language use.

3.2 Pronunciation assessment should be applied

Morley (1991) believed, “not attending to a student's pronunciation needs is an abrogation of professional responsibility” (p. 489). The effect of this ‘professional responsibility’ can be recognized by the findings of the present study, suggesting that the application of an assessment of the students’ pronunciation skills could be an indicator in improving their English pronunciation. This can be assumed to be a strong motivation for English pronunciation instruction and practice both in classrooms and outside classrooms. This is because the results of this study revealed that the students whose pronunciation skills were measured in paper grammar-based exams were engaged in practising pronunciation skills and speaking skills, though the teachers focused on segmental elements. It would be desirable for suprasegmental elements to be added to individual sounds in assessment, with recordings being used in speaking exams for this purpose. It would be useful to introduce teaching of syllable structures and other suprasegmental features to current students at university where this study was conducted since they are being trained to be teachers of English.
3.3 Foreign teachers should be employed

This research also suggests that the lack of foreign teachers of English is another cause of students’ low pronunciation proficiency. Although the students had been trained to be professional teachers of English for more than a whole semester, and they had been taught the four English macroskills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, their English pronunciation competence was still restricted, as shown in this study. The findings suggest that their pronunciation could not be improved effectively by Vietnamese teachers alone, as Vietnamese teaching staff on the whole have little or no training in the appropriate methods of pronunciation teaching. This is in line with Dang’s (2004) suggestion that, “[b]adly trained and badly paid teachers result in poor teaching methods, improper pronunciation and a lack of teacher motivation” (p. 68). This is supported by Ha (2005) in her study on university EFL students’ intelligibility, proposing that “[i]f a person learns a foreign language, he/she should communicate with foreigners, and if he/she cannot produce intelligible speech, they certainly will fail in communication” (p. 2). Robertson (2003) suggested that “[p]ronunciation programs in Asia must and can be delivered successfully by native speakers of English irrespective of their varying levels of educational background” (p.8), whilst Fromkin et al. (1998) extend the category to those with near native speech.

3.4 A reduction in class size and an increase in instruction time

Class sizes range from 50 to 60 students, making it difficult for teachers to manage their lectures effectively. Moreover, teaching time is limited to 90 minutes per week, which is insufficient for teachers to enable their students to use English verbally. Evidence from this study suggests that both class size and limited class time in each subject (e.g. speaking) will influence the quality of teaching of pronunciation, as the students have little chance to practise speaking English, restricting their pronunciation competence. This is in accordance with the idea that “[o]ver-sized English classes make speaking lessons stiff and unmoving” (Bui, 2004,
It would better, therefore, to make classes smaller, and to increase teaching time if possible, so that students will be able to have more time to engage in oral communication with their classmates and teachers and to have their mistakes recognized and corrected by their teachers.

4. **DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This thesis shows that the difference in syllable structures between Vietnamese and English is a factor impacting on adult ESL/EFL speakers’ intelligibility. Unaware of these differences, the students in this research applied the L1 syllable structure pronunciation habits for producing English. Phonological awareness raising is an important component of language acquisition. More research in how to teach better phonological awareness to Vietnamese language speakers would, therefore, be beneficial. Pronunciation assessment was also found to be a potential strategy for improving adult ESL/EFL speech output. Further research into adult L2 speaker intelligibility is therefore necessary to provide further insights into these factors.

Further research also needs to investigate ways in which L1 transfer into L2 reduces adult L2 speaker intelligibility by focusing on the differences in syllable structure between L1 and L2, rather than just Vietnamese and English, for example, Thai and English. Such research will help to provide more evidence of the direct influence on L2 speakers’ intelligibility and to make pedagogic recommendations on improving L2 adult learners’ speaking skills.

It is hoped that further studies will provide more evidence supporting the current findings.

Lastly, while the current study provides the finding that grammar-based pronunciation tests could be a good way of improving adult ESL speakers’ intelligibility, further studies ought to place an emphasis on examining what and how L2 learners’ pronunciation assessed by teachers will help to enhance adult L2 learner intelligibility.
5. LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the current study that need to be pointed out are: the population of the investigated cohort, 50 students, is small and might not be representative of the large majority of Vietnamese adult EFL learners. The second limitation is that the attitude and mode of some raters might have affected the quality of their transcriptions from the pronunciation recordings assigned to them.

Additionally, although the study provides evidence for the use of the CV category in the case of multi-syllabic errors, there might be other potential factors (e.g., stress, pauses) for the polysyllabic errors. For instance, Zielinski (2006) pointed out in her study of an adult Vietnamese ESL speaker’s intelligibility with three native (Australian) listeners that syllable stress errors are a potential factor in reducing speaker intelligibility. This study suggested that the syllable stress pattern was sufficiently different from standard use that it misled the listeners, who had to concentrate heavily on it in their efforts to achieve understanding.

Another limitation of the pronunciation data is that the researcher does not use multiple raters for intelligibility to enhance reliability for the study.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In summary, this research provides three major findings and five additional minor findings to the research questions. The responses are classified into three categories, namely factors reducing adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility, causes, and improvement. All of these are outlined in the following table.
Table 22

Outline of the study's findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Findings of This Study</th>
<th>The Lack of Previous Pronunciation Instruction</th>
<th>The Lack of Explicit Instruction in Pronunciation: Current Instruction Focuses on Segmental Mastery While Giving Lower Priority to Suprasegmentals and Overlooking Syllable Structure</th>
<th>The Lack of Practice and Exposure to Authentic Language, Particularly to Foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So many pronunciation errors strongly reducing adult EFL speakers' intelligibility</td>
<td>Quite a syllable structure errors</td>
<td>Open syllables (CV) applied to English close syllable polysyllabic words and words containing CVL and CVM/N/K structures. The CV also used to articulate the English CCV. Insertion of /k/ to English close syllables in pronunciation and deletion of the second consonant of English clusters are mainly due to the Vietnamese syllable structure transfer to the English syllable structure in the students' speech.</td>
<td>Informants' pronunciation skill could be improved by the application of pronunciation tests to assess this skill. This could be a motivation for learners to engage in practising pronunciation on their own or their oral output with other people, even with foreigners in verbal communications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses can also be verbalized as follows: Yes, Vietnamese students have major problems with pronunciation because they use negative transfer and carry over their mother tongue pronunciation habits into the target language. There are several causes why their
pronunciation is weak and there are a range of strategies that could be applied in order to solve this problem.

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An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: READING TEXT USED FOR THE PRONUNCIATION TEST

PRONUNCIATION TEST

AN INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE MOTHER TONGUE ON VIETNAMESE ADULT EFL LEARNERS' SPEECH INTELLIGIBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO SUPRASEGMENTALS

We’ve all known students who’ve had a good understanding of the subject material yet failed exams or performed well-below expectations. Likewise, we’ve known students that have, for all intents and purposes, done very little work and passed with flying colours. Often these results can be put down to one thing – stress or a lack of it.

Don’t underestimate the importance that stress plays in exam performance. With any exam, you should front up feeling confident, comfortable and organized. Rightly or wrongly, exams in effect, not only test your academic ability, they assess your frame of mind and your skill to perform under pressure.

We all recognise that stress affects us physically – I’m sure you’ve all experienced an increased pulse, or sweaty hands or underarms, or shortness of breath when placed in a stressful situation. Sleeplessness can also be a problem around exam time. The most effective
way to manage these physiological reactions is through controlled breathing – which we’ll practise later.

Psychologically, stress affects the way you think. For an exam you need to think rationally, particularly after you read an exam paper which you know nothing about is very hard to do. Otherwise, stress can make you panic. Look at the question calmly and rationally and dissect the question. And let’s face it, even if you haven’t prepared well enough, you’ll still need to think rationally in order to do your best under those very trying circumstances!

Don’t rely on what other students tell you about the time they allocate to study. The reports we have had over the years have been ridiculously overestimated and underestimated. We’re all different, so it stands to reason that the time we need to allocate to study will be different! Generally speaking, for every hour of lectures you attend, you will need another hour of follow-up or research work if you want to achieve good grades.

End of the pronunciation test

Total of words: 312  - Total sentences: 17
APPENDIX 2: TABLE 1 OF 50 STUDENTS’ PRONUNCIATION ERRORS

Pronunciation errors of 50 participants shown by comparisons between a number of words rightly transcribed and total of words in the original copy used in the pronunciation test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant transcript No</th>
<th>Number of words rightly transcribed</th>
<th>Total of words in the original copy used in the pronunciation test</th>
<th>Number of errors each participant made: calculated by the formula: Errors = total of words – number of words rightly transcribed</th>
<th>Number of sentences transcribed correctly: out of 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>0</td>
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### APPENDIX 3: TABLE 2 OF SYLLABLE ERRORS

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<td>(From Iran teacher of English in Australia for one year and currently a translator in Iran: MA in applied linguistics with honour from Griffith University)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessors 2 (from Taiwan: teacher of English in Hong Kong, MA in Applied Linguistics from Griffith University)</td>
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<td>Assessors 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Australian office administrator for GHD in Brisbane)</td>
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<td>Assessors 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Native English-Australian student at University of Queensland)</td>
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<td>Assessors 5</td>
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<td>(British man working as an architect in Australia for a decade.)</td>
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An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

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<tr>
<th>Assessor 6</th>
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<td>British office man working in Australia for two years</td>
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<td>Assessor 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>British man living and working in Australia for 20 years</td>
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<td>Assessor 8</td>
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<td>IT expert: from Holland studying, working in Australia since year 9</td>
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<td>Assessor 10</td>
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<td>Indian-Singaporean : English teacher in Australia (MA from Griffith University in 2009)</td>
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APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE

AN INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE MOTHER TONGUE ON VIETNAMESE ADULT EFL LEARNERS’ SPEECH INTELLIGIBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO SUPRASEGMENTALS

I am interested in your English pronunciation learning and teaching experiences and your oral communication practice for my research project, which is likely to be useful for your pronunciation English improvement. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

Instructions: When you are presented with several answers right below to a question, please put an X over the one that best corresponds to your answer. You are also likely to put more than one X over the ones that are the best representatives to your answers. For example, with Question 3 below if you would like to choose three options, you put three X’s over the three answers to this question:

Which of the following English pronunciation elements was taught in the classroom?

a) Discrimination of sounds X
b) Pronunciation of new words (including stressed syllables) X
c) Connected speech
d) Intonation X
e) Rhythm

All of the information provided by you will be kept confidential under the confidential laws regulated by the Vietnamese and Australian Governments Privacy Legislation, and should not be disclosed to a third party without any your express permission in writing.

I) General Information
Your age: __________________________________________________

Gender: (put an X over the one that corresponds to your answer)

Male _____
Female _____

II) Your English pronunciation learning background

1. How long have you learned English?
   a) three years
   b) seven years
   c) over seven years

2. Was English pronunciation taught when you were a high school student?
   a) Yes
   b) No (if no, please, go to Question 6)

3. How often was English pronunciation taught in the classroom?
   a) Every day
   b) Every other day
   c) Twice a week
   d) Once a week
   e) Every two weeks
   f) ..................

4. Which of the following English pronunciation elements was taught in the classroom?
a) Discrimination of sounds  
b) Pronunciation of new words (including stressed syllables)  
c) Connected speech  
d) Intonation  
e) Rhythm  
f) ……..  

5. How was English pronunciation taught?  
a) Pronouncing new words and phrases after the teacher  
b) Pronouncing new words and phrases, then reading a text after the teacher (authentic reading text or conversation from the textbook)  
c) Pronouncing new words and phrases, then listening to and repeating after the tape recording the reading text or conversation.  

6. Were oral communications taught in the classroom?  
a) Yes  
b) No (if no, please go to question 8)  

7. How were oral communications taught?  
a) Pair work  
b) Group work  
c) Whole class with the teacher  
d) Others: ……………………  

8. Were pronunciation mistakes corrected by the teacher?
9. What mistakes were corrected by the teacher in the classroom?
   a) Correcting the words which were wrongly pronounced.
   b) Correcting intonation or rhythm which was used in an improper way.

10. Was your pronunciation assessed by examinations in the classroom?
    a) Yes
    b) No (if no, go to question 13)

11. Which of the following pronunciation elements was used to assess your pronunciation?
    a) Discriminating sounds
    b) Identifying stressed syllable of words
    c) Corrected speech
    d) Intonation
    e) Rhythm
    f) ...........

12. Under what form were the pronunciation elements tested
    a) Listening to the tape and answering the questions asked in the pronunciation test.
    b) Assessed in your oral examinations.
    c) Included in the general knowledge exams (consisting of grammar, reading and writing aspects) without using any recordings containing authentic speech)

III) Amount of exposure
13. Did you ever practise your pronunciation?
   a) Yes
   b) No (if no, go to question 16)

14. How often did you practise your pronunciation?
   a) Every day
   b) Every other day
   c) Twice a week
   d) Once a week
   e) Every two weeks
   f) Other…………

15. How long did your pronunciation practice last for one time?
   a) Fifteen minutes
   b) Half an hour
   c) Forty five minutes
   d) An hour
   e) Over an hour
   f) Other ……..

16. How did you practise your pronunciation?
   a) Pronouncing unfamiliar words with a help of a dictionary.
   b) Pronouncing unfamiliar words with a help of a dictionary, then reading a reading text or a conversation by yourself.
   c) Pronouncing unfamiliar words with a help of a dictionary, then reading a reading text or a conversation after the tape.
d) Using cable TV as means for enhancing your pronunciation (e.g. English world news, documentaries, movies…)
e) ..................

17. Did you ever use your English in oral communications?
a) Yes
b) No (if no, end of the questionnaire)

18. With whom did you communicate in English
a) Foreigners (both native English speakers and non-native English speakers)
b) Your English speaking club members
c) Your parents or siblings of fluent English
d) Your teacher or tutor
e) .........................

19. How often did you use your English for this purpose?
a) Once a week
b) Every two weeks
c) Once a month
d) Every two months
e) Other.............

Thank you for responding the questionnaire.

End of the questionnaire
APPENDIX 5:

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Summary of questionnaire data

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<th>Participants</th>
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<td>32/50</td>
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<tr>
<td>25/50</td>
<td>No pronunciation instruction nor oral communication instruction</td>
<td>No pronunciation instruction or no oral communication instruction</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>39/50 (78%)</td>
<td>No pronunciation instruction or no oral communication instruction</td>
<td>No pronunciation instruction or no oral communication instruction</td>
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<td>23/50 (50%)</td>
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<td>31/55 (62%)</td>
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Pronunciation assessment made by

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<td>Writing-based tests</td>
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<td>Tape-based tests</td>
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<td>10/50 (20%)</td>
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APPENDIX 6: TRANSCRIPTS OF THE TEACHERS’ INTERVIEWS

TRANSCRIPTS OF LECTURER 1 INTERVIEW

1 R: Hi Quan. How’s it going, mate?
2 I: Ah things are very good. How about you?
3 R: I’m fine. Thanks. And have you read the interview [proto…]
4 I: I read it very thoroughly and carefully.
5 R: Oh, yeah. Good, good. And could you tell me something about you and your students?
6 I: Uh Ok. Now I am fully a lecturer of English department, university of pedagogy, Ho Chi Minh City. I graduated in 2009, and now I have one and half years of experience. uh about my students. Uh they are mainly first year mainstream students. uh they have about, more, at least six years to study English, and they have a very high level in entrance exams. Their entrance exams last year include mostly reading and grammar multiple choice que[stions.]
7 R: [Hm]
8 I: however, their levels of communication is quite good because ah most of them especially are the students in Ho Chi Minh City who have a very good condition. Uh
they used to go to a foreign English centre. They have experience, they have endurance, lots of periods in communication with foreign teachers at the foreign language centre.

R: Sure. And what is the main purpose of the English program for your students?

I: uh, the main purpose of teaching English right here is to train them, in order to provide the society with a good source of teachers in the future. You know, in Vietnam ah the teachers ah I mean the amount of teachers are quite, are not a very big amount. They are still in quite of uh uh, we are in short of teachers. So, the university of pedagogy, we are a source of teachers in the future. So, we will provide the teachers for the society. And here in the English Department, ah we train the teachers of English.

R: You mean that you focus on the four skills.

I: In fact, we, we uh our stream, our syllabus includes four years of training. Ah in fact, ah within about two, the first two or three years, ah we sharpen their skills. uh for the new credit program, uh the first one or two years, we just focus on the general subjects provided by the university in terms of English skills. We just focus on the four skill(s). About second year, we start giving them specific subjects on like ELT and some theory of language of teaching. I think the proportion, proportion of language skill is very big in our syllabus.

R: And you mean that you focus on the four skills in the first two years

I: yeah, we focus a lot on four skills. However, especially we focus on reading. I mean, I remember, we still have up to a lot, we still have some credit(s) for reading

R: yeah, what do you think about the fact that University students, uh in general, could not use their English in oral communications with foreigners?

I: I don’t know about other universities. However, I’m sure uh I’m quite confident that the students in our department, especially the mainstream students, who are expected to become future teachers. They are quite good at communicating in English. Yeah, I’m sure about that.

R: They have a good chance to communicate with foreigners in English.

I: In fact. In our department, I mean we are, uh we, uh… all of us are Vietnamese. However, sometime(s), we have a quite of exchange program(s) in which foreign teachers come and attend our class. Sometime(s), they have a chance to come in and be in charge of our class in some periods. Uh however, I think that the students in our university, especially from our department are very active. So besides, they study here, some of them have part time job. uh and, they we sometime(s) have foreign educational
exhibition(s). They come here. They have a chance, occasion to practice English. So so, it’s very [d..]

19 R: [yeh], that’s a good chance for them to communicate with foreigners
20 I: Yeah.

21 R: What do mean by sometimes uh foreigners come over here and teach English?
22 I: I think this is a good chance for them. [However, ah]

23 R: [I mean that] what do you say. uh and what do you mean by sometimes you used foreign teachers come over here and they are in charge of teaching English to your students?
24 I: uh, [uh] =

26 I: = Sometimes? as I told you before it’s up to the program. For example, the Fulbright program for American style come(s) in here. Sometimes, the students from Belgium come here…

27 R: Every year?
28 I: Uh, I’m not sure about that. Ah it’s up to …in this university. I think every year, we have a chance.

29: R: Do you think that your students have a good chance to communicate with foreigners in English or native speakers?
30 I: You mean in our university or in general?
31 R: yeah, first year and second year students [in…]
32 I: [As I] told you before in the university, we have sometime(s) exchange program for students. However, outside they are very willing, they have lots of chance to contact with foreigners and they can use English to communicate and they are willing to do so.

33 R: Yeah, that’s good. I think I want you to clarify sometimes that I am confused he he.
34 I: Sometimes, you mean about chance and frequency of contacting with foreigners?
35 R: YES

36 I: They have a lot of chance. However, we are not satisfied with the chance in the university. I’m not sure about the outside. However, In my own opinion, my point of view, we should provide more chance for foreigners coming here. I think a good amount of teachers coming here.

37 R: Hm, you said that your students, a majority of your students feel confident to use their English in communication with foreigners?
38 I: Yeah, a majority of them. Sure.
39 R: Sure?
40 I: Sure
41 R: uh and no one has weaknesses in oral competence in communication with foreigners..
42 I: I think all of them maybe up to [95% uh]
43 R: [first year or se]cond year students. I focus on the first year students.
44 I: First year students, I think that we apply (imply) that 95 percent of first year students, especially the mainstream students, they can use their English to communicate with foreigners. Mainstream students
45 R: Are you sure?
46 I: Sure about that
47 R: And uh, Ok. Do you think the shyness of your students is a big concern in your speaking skills instruction related to pronunciation skills?
48 I: Can you repeat the question please?
49 R: I mean do you think the shyness of your students is a big concern in your pronunciation instruction?
50 I: Ok [about..]
51 R: [Shyness], they are shy to speak out, they are shy to come up with something and stand up and say something to their teachers and to their foreigners.
52 I: Uh, also characteristics of English department students. I mean they are sometime(s) effected by the western style. So they are so open-minded. Uh and if they have any questions, they ask me. A majority of them. And of course, some of them are quite shy. Most of them, if they have a question, they, I mean, they have critical thinking. And sometime(s), I make mistakes. And they, they’ willing stand up. I am wrong. ..quite different from their point of view. We can discuss that. Yeah sometime(s), I .. I am wrong and I learn from them too.yeah
53 R: Yeah, that’s good.
54 I: Yeah, good.
55 R: Sure. Uh and can you tell me some more difficulties you have in teaching pronunciation and verbal communication with your students, especially first year students?
56 I: Of course, first year students, they are not quite as confident as other students. They have a lot of, I mean, problems, ah however in terms of speaking, they are quite lack of..ah their pronunciation is not sharpened enough. So I am now in charge of speaking
class. So ah the problem sometime(s) you see. They, they, some of them I mean quite not confident about that they can speak with teachers. Some of them especially, who come from the rural area. Yeah =

57 R: yeah
58 I: = But, there’s something wrong. Not a lot of problems with city dwellers here. Some of other problems. For example, some of difficult sounds. For example we distinguish Sh sound because we don’t have this sound in the Vietnamese pronunciation system. So, I spend time teaching them and having them discussing and as well as produc(t)ing them, the sound =

59 R: [Properly]
60 I: = [However], they are making progress. Some of them still make mistakes. But I think, I believe in the future when they contact, when they face the relatives, they cannot be understood if they make that mistake. So, they can correct it themselves.

61 R: By themselves
62 I yeah by themselves
63 R: Do you think learners’ learning style is another concern in your teaching pronunciation?
64 I: uh, [uh]
65 R: [es]pecially in your teaching speaking skills related to pronunciation?
66 I: You mean learning style
67 R: learning style? Can you tell me about mo[re..]?
68 I: [In the intro]duction, the students’ life in university, I mean I put a very emphasis on the self study (life/file). Uh, I told them there is a big difference between high school students and University students. At university, you study by yourselves, yeah for the most of time because if you don’t do that you can’t catch up with the lecturers here. Yeah, They are fine. They are first year students so it is not easy for them to transfer the old style to a new style. However, they’re trying a lot because they have passed the first semester now they are in (their) second semester. And I can see they progress uh, yeah they can do it by themselves, yeah.

69 R: Can you clarify they can do it by themselves? They learn something by themselves you mean that. And of course, they change the learning style from a teacher-centred model into a learner-centred model? Do you think so?

70 I: In fact, at this level, I don’t think they can, I mean, totally change into the student centre. However, they can learn, I mean following the instruction of the lecturers.
R: Hm

I: In my opinion, just about third or fourth year student. They can learn by themselves.

R: hm. Ok. That’s good. I agree with you about this.

I: yeah

R: Uh and of course, you have some difficulties you’ve exposed to me uh and can you tell me how to deal with the difficulties you have faced in teaching your students’ speaking skills regarding their pronunciation skills?

I: yeah, as I told you before we have a problem with unfamiliar sounds in Vietnamese pronunciation system.

R: yeah

I: uh and I used to use the authentic materials in teaching them distinguish those difficult sounds.

R: what do you mean by authentic?

I: uh, for example my favourite pronunciation textbook is sound English. I forget the name of author. It is tradition.

R: the book? How about the [cd,=]

I: [uh] [uh] =

R: videos you used to enhance their[…]

I: [the CD].

Sure, in fact not the cd but in a clip. I download it from the BBC English. Org. I think that after they’ve done that. After they have (a) presentation. They think They realize it is a very good source. So they follow the link and they download it back and they show it to their classmates. And of course I see that they improve it a lot. You know that in the clip, we have two cameras, two different aspects of the speaker(s) and from that they can see ah how they ,mount, move when they produce that sound. They can imitate the sound.

R: Yeah

I: That’s a good way

R: Yeah, it’s a good way

I: They pro[duce]

R: [yeah], correctly and properly you mean?

I: Yeah

R: Uh, uh do you think that a large amount of students in your class is another
problem to enhance their speaking skills?

92 R: Can you repeat it?

93 R: I mean, a large amount of students, crowded =

94 I: Yeah

95 R: crowded, that is a problem for you to enhance your [...]  

96 I: [In fact], it ('s a) big problem to us . You know the size of English language learning classroom should be about 20 and 25 people because we lack, I mean, our university is under construction of a new campus. So, we are lack of classroom. So we are to mix class together and the size comes up o 50 or 60 in one class. So we have a very big big problem because I cannot stretch my attention to all of them. So I just pick up a maximum about 30 students at one period, I mean at one class.

97 R: Uh, and the others, you can’t pay attention to, you couldn’t?

98 I: yeah, I think. I come up with a solution that a pairwork, team work, they can correct with each other about, I mean, the sounds. However, I’m not sure whether it can be effective or not. I think, it is the best way we can, I can do in solution of a big classroom like that.

99 R: yeah. That’s a big problem

100 I: yeah a big problem now.

101 R: Uh and how do you deal with a problem that someone has a mistake in a group. How do you correct their mistakes? How do you help them to correct their mistakes in pronunciation while they speaking to each other…?

102 I: Yeah. How I correct them? Right? Yeah before I had them some kind exercise(s) of pronunciation. I show them. I mean, we teach them the minimal pairs, confused sounds. Ok. We show it. I mean, we demonstrate how to pronounce that sound. We had them distinguish the sound. Finally, they pronounce the [sound.] =

103 R: [yeah]

104 I: they distinguish however, of course, as I told you before, the problem is a big class. So, some of them don’t quite catch up with the idea. =

105 R: Hm

106 I: so, in that case, in that case, we, after. Ok I mean, for example, I have them do a task by reading a paragraph with the sound(s). I mean problematic sound(s). I will listen to them from the start to the end. And I will take note(s) of [the..]

107 R: [the sounds].

108 I Yeah.
109 R: **You mean, the consonant or vowel..**

110 I **Yeah the focus of the lesson, for example s and sh and we pay attention to that only.**

111 R: **Yeah**

112 I: **Uh, if they make mistake(s), I will take note(s) of place they make mistake(s) and after they have fini(shed). I will ask the other students so that for exam[ple] = [hm]**

113 R: **[hm]**

114 I: **= can you recognize? Is there anything wrong with your pronunciation or not? = **

115 R: **hm**

116 I **= so. Ok, for example [the] =**

117 R: **[the] whole class**

118 I **= the whole class they can follow me with that and not just one student to do that to also the other person. Finally, ok, I will show them some of mistake(s) they make, ask them to do the task again.**

119 R: **Yeah, and of course ah you produce these sounds, you discriminate discriminate these sounds and you pronounce them first, and they follow you or you use other ways, the CD or native speakers.**

120 I: **A long process of teaching. So I told you that practice should be a last stage and before practice, I show them, demonstrate, and have them produce them**

121 R: **Iitate**

122 I: **Imitate the sound(s)**

123 R: **Imitate the sounds and follow you.**

124 I: **Yeah. We also conduct oral repetition as well as in the video repetition**

125 R: **Yeah, and the last question for you is that how do, uh, uh… let me see, I’m sorry. Do you think the teachers’ income is another concern.**

126 I: **Big concern.**

127 R: **Big concern? And you can’t spend your time in teaching and you get some jobs, another job.**

128 I: **Uh, yeah it once passed my mind. However, a big benefit for teaching career is the respect of students. Yeah, I think it’s very uh uh[..]**

129 R: **[uh] your income affects the quality of teaching English to your students?**

130 I: **No, not enough way. I think that time affects the quality not the incomes. You see. The teachers when they come to the [class].**

131 R: **[I mea]n you don’t have time to prepare your lessons or lectures.**
132 I: Yeah, we don’t have time to prepare for the lectures.
133 R: you spend all the time get another job for other incomes or money.
   Uh, extra money for your living costs.
134 I: Yeah, that is a big problem.
135 R: And a question that is very important is that uh uh and what aspects of
   pronunciation have you explicitly taught in the classroom to enhance the Vietnamese
   EFL learners. I mean, you focus on discrimination of sounds, vowels and consonants?
   Can you tell me some more details about what aspects of pronunciation have been
   explicitly taught in the classroom?
136 I: In fact at the level, uh, first year students, we pay attention to discrimination of
   the sounds for example vowels, consonants as well as clusters at the level of first
   year student(s).
137 R: and how about second year..
138 I: the second. According to the syllabus, we, we bring them to uh uh a big scale. We
   give them topic so they have to combine the accurate pronunciation and the ideas so
   that they can express themselves(s).
139 R: That is the discrimination of sounds, vowels, consonants in pronunciation skills. That
   is enough for them to enhance their pronunciation skills and they feel confident to
   communicate with foreigners?
140 I: You know, they feel very confi[dent when..]
141 R [I mean that] do you think it is enough if you focus
   on the discrimination of sounds?
142 I: I think so. Yeah. it is enough and a big problem. So, just focus on that
143 R: That is the aspects you focus on your teaching them to enhance their pronunciation.
144 I YEAH
145 R: Ok. Thank you so much, Quan
146 I: You’re welcome.

TRANSCRIPTS OF LECTURER’S INTERVIEW 2
1 R: Hi, how are you doing?
2 I: I’m fine. Thanks. And you?
3 R: Yeah, fine. Thanks.
4 I: Yeah
5 R: uh, and I gave the interview protocol last week?
Yeah.

You read it didn’t you?

Yeah, I have read all the questions already.

are you ready for the interview? Aren’t you?

Yes. I’m ready. He he

Uh, could you tell me something about you and your students?

Uh, I’m now a lecturer here. Let’s say I am teaching English for almost three years.

The language skill I am teaching is listening.

The second question is about my students, right?

Yeah

That to say my students have good comment(s) of English. Because they have learned English for almost three years, uh [seven years]

[seven years.]

Sorry seven years. And also they are the students who are trained to become teachers. So that means that they speak English very fluently and they have very good comment of English.

You mean before they come over here. They speak English fluently.

Yeah

Yeah previously, they spoke English very good, very well, I mean

yeah. That’s right. Before they come here, they speak English very fluently.

what evidence you based on for your saying?

that to say that at the beginning of the course, I have a test, the listening test to know the students’ ability so that I have to conduct the course and I found that all the students got an eight or nine and very rare they got low marks.

Hm.

That I think so.

So good. Uh, and how do you improve your students’ listening skills via pronunciation skills?

that to say. To improve my students’ pronunciation skills and listening skills, so, I [let the students.]

[your students’] listening skills.

Yeah, that to say that I will teach the students some techniques when they do the listening. For example, listening for …how to listen for …listening for details. How to
listen to the listening for details, and about some pronunciation, something regarding pronunciation, when I teach them listening. For example about linking sounds, about assimilation and about the intonation to show the people’s attitude when they do with the listening. Yeah

31 R: Yeah, do you think that intonation, something you’ve just talked about this, they can help students’ listening skill?

32 I: Yeah

33 R: Do you think so?

34 I: Yeah, I think that if I teach them intonation and pronunciation. That is one way, a good way to improve the students’ listening skills because from the intonation, they can know the speaker’s attitudes and they can find out where they are and they can find out something about their pronunciation is good because if they know the linking sound(s), they can find out the meaning of the word. And one more thing, that to say that some words in a sentence are stressed and some words may be unstressed. So I teach them which word is stress and which word is unstressed. They can guess the word grammar when they’re listening.

35 R: That’s a good theory.

36 I: yeah,

37 R: On which material you base your listening techniques you provide for your students?

38 I: about the textbook, that to say that I have a variety of textbook(s). uh and for example, there’re some textbook(s) to improve their listening skill EFC. and Let’s talk. And let’s listen. That to say there are a variety of textbook(s), good thing for students. That to say sound English.

39 R: Yeah ah, do you think the CD that native speaker says that you based on your listening skill to improve their pronunciation.

40 I: I also use the cd, recorded by native speakers (I) use in class.

41 R: uh and you analyze the intonation or rhythm or stress.

42 I: uh yes, that’s right. That to say I analyse the rhythm for them and sometime(s), I follow some clip(s) from youtube or some clip(s) by BBC so that to say the authentic text. They recognize the intonation in real life as well.

43 R: That’s good. That’s good. What do you think about a majority of university students in general could not use their English in oral communication with foreigners and of course for your students, too?
I: about some problems in their oral communication with foreigners. Yeah because you know that they are all Vietnamese students. So they live in Vietnam. So they lack to exposure to foreigners. So they have a little chance to communicate with foreigner(s). So what reaction in the recording is somewhat different from reaction from real life. And because foreigners in real life, they speak a little fast. So that is difficult for student(s) to understand. So that’s the reason why they have difficulty when they communicate (ing) with foreigners.

R: Uh how about uh, uh their oral competence, uh I mean they apply their first language habit into English pronunciation that is a difficulty for them to communicate with foreigners?

I: That’s right. So that to say that because there are some English sound(s). They do not exist in the Vietnamese sounds. For example, for the sound like, ‘think’ is so difficult for student(s) to pronounce these sounds. So they may also be called some problems for them. And one more thing, about consonant cluster(s). Some consonant cluster(s) make students difficult to listen to. Yeah

R: do you think that is what they are confused and they have a problem in pronunciation and leading to their breakdown in communication?

I: I don’t think.

R: Consonants and vowels, intonation, stress, rhythm. which one, according to you is the most difficult obstacle or difficulty for them to communicate with foreigners?

I: I think intonation is the most important.

R: why?

I: Yeah, I think so because I think intonation is the rhythm. Rhythm is difficult because for example, you know that rhythm in a tag question is for examples. So that means that if you raise your voice for the tag question and you mean that you seek for the information. And if you low your voice, that means that you seek agreement from other people. If students do not know that, they can’t recognize and they can’t communicate with other people. That is what I think.

R: and what aspects of pronunciation you focus on in order to enhance your learners’ listening skills related to pronunciation skills?

I: Sorry, can you repeat?

R: Uh what aspects of pronunciation do you focus on your lecture?

I: That to say aspect of pronunciation. That to say about the sounds

R: The sounds, discrimination between two sounds?
I: Yeah
R: minimal pairs?
I: Yeah, to minimal pairs and some words, that to say, students are usually confused when they are listening to the tape. And the second thing is about the stressed word and unstressed word(s).
R: In an utterance?
I: Yeah in an utterance.
R: Uh and how can. You can say some more reasons for weaknesses in oral competence from your learners?
I: Uh, again?
R: Can you give some more reasons for your learners’ weaknesses in oral competence?
I: In oral competence. I said earlier. That to say, they live in Vietnam. So just inside the class, they have a chance to use English with other people and the teachers as well. But outside the class, they have no chance to use the target language, that to say that English here.
R: he he sure, and [uh..] =
I: [One more] thing
R: = how about foreigners come over here and they have a chance to communicate with native speakers, I mean?
I: That to say that there are some native speakers come here but rare.
R: rare?
I: yeah. It’s very rare.
R: What do you mean by rare. I mean, once a year or twice a year? They have a chance to contact foreigners.
I: Actually, because here in our university, all the class(es) are conducted by Vietnamese teachers and no time for (the) foreign teachers. And outside the class, the students are also very shy and when they meet foreigner(s) and they can’t communicate with them.
R: Ok, do you think the shyness is another concern that is leading to their communication breakdown with foreigners?
I: that’s right. I think shyness is another concern.
R: uh of course and they are shy to come up with their ideas to stand up and speak in the class =
I: [uh..]
R: = [to their]r teachers and to foreigners?

I: Let’s say that in class, there are some students. They are very active.

R: Some, how many students are there in the class.

I: Fifty students in my class.

R: Some of the students, half or [uh…]

I: [I think] that is around, let’s see one third of the class.

R: They’re shy?

I: Yeah they are shy. When I ask a question, they keep silent and in class, they seem to be very passive.

R: Hm do you think the class is crowded, that is another problem for you to enhance their listening skill and pronunciation skill at the same time.

I: Yeah, the also another problem for a big class. You cannot care for individual students. And so, it is difficult to correct their pronunciation mistakes and then intonation as well. But I just do it in pairs. They do the pair correction. Yeh

R: and we turn to the learning style. Do you think the learning style is another matter to interfere in your listening instruction?

I: Let’ say about the learning style, uh in my opinion, they also play some important roles in listening skill. That to say that in students’ skills. I think some students are not good at listening skills. Some yeah.

R: some

I: Just some

R: Uh and the others’ re good. How do you deal with the difficulties you’ve just told about your pronunciation instruction and listening skill instruction in classroom? And how do you deal with the difficulties you have faced?

I: uh[…]

R: [the shy]ness, the crowded class and different regional background?

I: Yeah, that to say. Some students are not good in English. I will ask them to do some practice at home and I will check, I will check their practice. For the shyness, that to say I will call them in class if they don’t active, if they are passive, they keep silent, I will call them. So, they can have a chance to speak in front of the class. Don’t let the good students dominate them. And third thing I mention. that to say about the crowded class. So for the crowded class, I usually put them into groups, put them into groups. So that, if they don’t understand, they can ask their friends. They can do some thing and will have a relationship with their friends, ask and answer with their friends,
R: Ok. I return to what you have said, you’ve mentioned about your learners’ oral competence. As you told that they spoke English well before they came here. And what the examinations did they pass to enter this university?

I: In order to enter this university, they had to pass the entrance exams.

R: What kind of examination they…were they required to take and pass?

I: That is just written examination.

R: Written?

I: Yeah written.

R: Uh, and they came over here, you test again their listening skills to make sure that they speak English well before they are chosen to be the members in your class?

I: That’s right. The test is format(ted) as written test. So, I care for their listening skill and speaking skill as well. Because before the class, I have a test to know about their competence.

R: Do you think your students feel confident enough to speak English to foreigners?

I: I think that, that to say, there’re just some.

R: Some, some of the 52 students? What do you mean by some? I want exactly what number.

I: That to say that about two thirds of class seem to be active and they like to communicate with foreigners. For example, last week, we have a foreigner come to observe our class. That to say that students seem to be active. They tried to communicate with him. Some students, they just sit silent. They just remain silent. They sit in the corner.

R: And what do you help the learners with passive style to become active style? I mean that learner-centered model, do you use it in the classroom?

I: The learner-centered model

R: Instead of teacher-centered model

I: That to say. Because I usually give them presentation in the class and I also give them some games, they can motivate the students. For example at home, I ask them to research some topics. When they come to class, they give the clips to the whole class and present about the clip to the whole class, to motivate their listening and speaking as well.

R: Ok, that’s a good idea. And one more question for you. What aspects of pronunciation, return to the question, have been explicitly taught in the classroom to enhance your students’ listening skill and speaking skill via the pronunciation skills?

I: Just explicitly.
R: Yeah.
I: Explicitly.
R: Aspects of pronunciation do you focus on?
I: Pronunciation, that to say. Of course, the consonants and the vowels
R: Vowels?
I: Yeah, how to pronounce one word. For example some difficult sound(s). Yeah. And the second thing is intonation.
R: Intonation?
I: Yeah intonation. For example, yes no questions, you should raise your voice or lower your voice. Wh question and the rhythm as well. So, for three things.
R: Which one do you emphasize most? vowels, consonants or intonation?
I: Usually I combine the two. But, I usually pay more attention to pronunciation of vowels and consonants.
R: Yeah, that’s a good idea. And thank you for your participation in this project. Thank you so much.
I: Yeah, you’re welcome.

TRANSCRIPTS OF LECTURER’S INTERVIEW 3
1 I: Hi
2 R: Hi, how have you been?
3 I: I’m very good. Thank you. and you?
4 R: Yeah so far so good. And you’re ready for the interview, aren’t you?
5 I: yes, I’m ready.
6 R: Ok, the first question is that let me know something about you and your students.
7 I: I’ve just graduated from this university, and I start, started teaching here since then. And right now I’m in charge of four classes here, ah two business classes, one class in interpretation and translation and the other major in the English language Teaching. Most of my students are very young, they’re about eighteen and nineteen, first year students.
8 R: Hm
9 I: About half of them come from Ho Chi Minh City and half come from other provinces in the south.
10 R: Yeah, uh and do you think there’s the relationship between pronunciation skills and speaking skill, the subject you are in charge of teaching your students.
I: Yes. Right now, I’m in charge of teaching speaking to for two classes. While I am teaching, I realize that there is a strong relation between pronunciation and speaking. Those students who are **not good at pronunciation are often shy** and they have aptitude to speak English are those that they are right here that to say they speak English in class they are **so shy**.

R: Hm,

I: **They speak Vietnamese** instead.

R: In the class?

I: Yeah in the class. **They got a problem with pronunciation. That’s why they cannot make their friends, understand them as well as teacher saying.**

R: Uh ok, uh do you think shyness and different regional backgrounds are two problems in your lecture.

I: yeah. **Ah those students who come from far, far provinces from Ho Chi Minh City have a few chances to expose their English.** They don’t have cable TV or they don’t attend evening classes like the students in Ho Chi Minh City. So they are in comparison, disadvantages.

R: In comparison with those who come from Ho Chi Minh City.

I: The students who come from Ho Chi Minh City. **uh, their speaking skill is not as good as those who were born and grow up here.**

R: Do you feel they feel confident enough to communicate with foreigners in English?

I: uh […]

R: [uh] both those who come from this city and outside this city

I: **Those, I think most of them are uh confident. They do not fear making mistakes. They make mistakes. It is ok, they accept that as a process of learning. For those who come from other areas. They are not open minded. They do not behave like those who come from HCM city. They are not open-minded.**

R: You mean those who come from other cities are shy. Uh [they…] =

I: [yeah shy and unconfident]

R: = [don’t feel confident] enough to communicate with their classmates.

I: **Their classmates and teacher.** And often when I ask them, when I ask my students to come to front and the wrong place. **Most students come from other areas, apart from Ho Chi Minh City. They never love (to) volunteer.**

R: Do you think they have a good chance to communicate with foreigners in English in this university?
I: I’m afraid not. Uh[...]
R: [why not]?
I: Because we do not have foreign teachers here. We used to have but not now. All students (teachers) who are in charge of speaking classes are Vietnamese.
R: You mean they feel confident to communicate with their teachers and their classmates in the classroom, not outside this university.
I: I mean that students who study here do not have much chance to talk, communicate with foreigners. And we do not have much time to practice speaking English.
R: That’s a problem, isn’t it?
I: because I have only two periods. That is [90 minutes for] =
R: [90 minutes].
I: = for each class every week.
R: Hm, yeah uh the class is crowded, isn’t it?
I: Yeah, the class is very big.
R: How many students are there in the class you are teaching speaking.
I: For two classes I’m in charge of. One of the class is around 40 students and the other is about 60.
R: About or over?
I: Actually, 61 he he
R: Yes, exactly number. And do you think the crowded class is a problem for you in your lecture in order to take care of all the members in the class?
I: Uh I cannot take care of all, I cannot control all. Sometimes, they … they move around and talk. I cannot control them because it’s too big, they talk at the same time. So very noisy. Some of them speak Vietnamese instead. I cannot pay attention to all of them. I cannot check. So, I move around and give a warning when I heard some Vietnamese. I also, when we practice role place and I want to ask some pairers to come to the front of the class and …out…it’s very difficult because I cannot ask a lot of pairers, just some pairers in the class big like this. A lot of students do not have a chance to come to the front and they have to listen to their friends most of the time.
R: Hm.
I: When they come to the front, they speak loudly, and I can check their pronunciation as well as expression they use correctly or not.
R: Yeah, that’s what you can do..
49 I: I mean, I can try my best.
50 R: Yeah.
51 I: But I cannot cover all.
52 R: I return to the question about problems you have faced in your lecture.
53 I: Yeah.
54 R: The problem is that crowded class =
55 I: Crowded class
56 R: = and different regional background
57 I: Yeah
58 R: = and shyness.
59 I: and shyness
60 R: = uh and how do you deal with the problems in your lecture. Uh from the beginning to right now your answers uh to the solution to the problems.
61 I: Yes.
62 R: I want to know more details about this.
63 I: Uh uh, take care of the shyness, I encourage them, come one, ok that mistake you are learning. The more mistake we make, the better you become. I have to tell them so many times. I think.....about the crowded class. I don’t think I can do nothing because it’s a part of the school.
64 R: Yeah.
65 I: For their pronunciation and speaking skills, I encourage them to watch movies in English as much as possible. As well in the class.
66 R: In the classroom [or..]
67 I: [at ho]me. you cannot have to play music or movies in class, when they go home they watch movies. For the situation they speak Vietnamese in class. Sometime, I have to turn to speak to them. So they they try to compete. When they win, their partners lose. So they observe each other.
68 R: Observe each other
69 I: And make sure that their friends do not cheat.
70 R: Yeah.
71 I: And make sure that they speak Eng[lish]=
72 R: [yeah]
73 I: = in class
74 R: That’s a good way, isn’t it.
I: Yeah.
R: He he, a question is that how do you recognize their mistakes in pronunciation and how do you correct their mistakes in a large class.
I: uh while practicing conversations, I move around
R: You move around?
I: Yeah, I move around and listen to the conversation and correct their mis[takes].
R: [Imme]diately after you recognize their mistakes?
I: Yeah **some mistakes only** because I have to move much..
R: Hm
I: As they practice conversation in pairs, I ask some to come to front and speak out loud.
R: Yeah.
I: And at that time, I can realize their mistakes very clearly and correct the mistakes in front of class.
R: class. And you [let]
I: [I] **let the whole class pay attention to the mistakes and correct together with other students.**
R: I think it’s a good way hehe.
I: Yeah.
R: what kind of mistakes, what mistakes do you focus on when you recognize the mistakes?
I: Usually, they must (be) the final sounds..
R: **Final sounds**
I: Some of them have a problem with =
R: [the vow]el
I: [=vowels]. **Consonant is ok. Vowels as well as some clusters.**
R: Clusters, you mean they do not exist in the Vietnamese language.
I: Some sounds do not exist in Vietnamese. Some sounds, there are similar sounds, I mean. uh uh[…]
R: [it doesn’t] matter really. And what else do you focus on besides consonants and vowels.
I: I focus on intonation.
R: Intonation?
I: Intonation as well as stress, too as well as gesture.
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

102 R: Structure?
103 I: Gesture.
104 R: ah [the way you move]
105 I: [The way you move ] your hands and your body while you are talking.
106 R: Ok that’s the way they make listeners understand what they are saying?
107 I: Yeah.
108 R: One more question, what aspects of pronunciation have been explicitly taught in the classroom in order to enhance your learners’ speaking skills via pronunciation skills?
109 I: Pronunciation, I pay attention to vowels. They make a lot of mistakes of vowels, clusters, minimal pairs and stress, sentence stress and word stress.
110 R: Yeah focus on the sentence stress, can you provide some more details about sentence stress you have just said to me.
111 I: I love the book called pronunciation games. I use a lot of games.
112 R: Hm.
113 I: Uh, in that book, some games, they focus on sentence stress and word stress, and my learners are very interested in that game. They don’t feel they are learning, they are playing in order to win to get presents. Also, I have, for example today …talk, not a very long one, a short one and ask them to read the talk in the …..and then ask them why is the talk boring because no intonation, no stress, no gesture, and then ask them what words are stressed here.
114 R: Yeah.
115 I: And we underline some words, important words which need stress.
116 R: That’s a good way.
117 I: Uh and then ask them to add some gesture and intonation and stress.
118 R: Yeah
119 I: And make it more interesting. I think I love it…today.
120 R: I think, return to foreign teachers and foreigners, who come over here.
121 I: Yeah.
122 R: Do you think they have a good chance to expose their English language in communication with foreigners, ah in this department?
123 I: As I told you, we don’t have a foreign teacher now, right now. Yeah, so the chance to talk to foreigners, native speakers in this department ah..
124 R: no, no chance
125 I: Yeah no chance
126 R: **We return to the aspects of pronunciation you focus on. And how often do you focus on sentence stress and intonation in the classroom you are in charge of teaching**

127 I: Yeah, I give them a talk.

128 R: How often.

129 I: **Not very often.**

130 R: What do you mean by not very often, rarely or once a month or…=

131 I: Ok [I mean]

132 R: **[sometimes]**

133 I: During the semester, I cannot, cannot spend so much time just one part of pronunciation. For example, I cannot spend two class meetings or three class meeting of sentence stress for each part of pronunciation, areas. I don’t have enough time, I just practice one only. **I can’t cover a lot and I can’t focus on one part** so many times

134 R: Yeah, in speaking classes, **you rarely do so.**

135 I: Yeah.

136 R: And another question, now I forgot about it. What do you think the textbook you currently use in your program?

137: I: **Right now, we use the sentional function for conversations, sound English as well as function in English, the book for sen function for conversations is good. It is basic about the day life, so it is suitable for the first-year students….about the book called, ah I forgot.**

138 R: It doesn’t matter really.


140 R: From America, or British English.

141 I: I prefer American English.

142 R: yeah I know, your accent is American. Do you ever use **a real conversation recorded between two foreigners for your students to practice in your.**

143 I: **I have never.**

144 R: Speaking subject

145 I: Because I, **we meet only two periods.** During the periods, we have a lot of things for pronunciation we learn ….sometimes I let them play games. In some games, it lasts about 20 minutes, half an hour or even 40 minutes. **So, pronunciation games.** I’d love to, I’d love to let them listen to sounds English because they talk less….**
Yeah, return to pronunciation game. What aspects of pronunciation do you focus on in the pronunciation games?

So far, I let them play pronunciation games focusing on consonants and vowels.

Vowels.

Intonation for tag questions.

And basic rules about intonation, you mean?

Yeah and sentence stress, some basic rules, for example. Give basic stress on pronouns, which stress on the content.

Stress on a multi-syllable words, you mean?

Yes, we have syllabus for pronunciation because I don’t have time.

I know, I know that’s a problem.

So, I ask them to practice those sounds at home. And when they come to class, I let them play games, some games of summaries about a sentence.

By writing, right?

No, no writing, by speaking. For exam[ple..]

[They pro]nounce the words and some sounds

for some games, they practice vowels and consonants and clusters at the same time.

And in what way? They pronounce the words, produce the words or they keep silent and use pencils or pens.

There’re two kinds of games. For some games for them to pronounce: one students pronounce a word and one student listens.

Listen.

They play like this.

Yeah.

For example, the game called come back to ships, the map.

Yeah.

On the map, you draw two ships and on the map, we have some sounds

Yeah.

We try to suit our friends’ ship by pronouncing the sounds, the words on the map.

Yeah, that’s a good way.

Yeah. Ah for some games, the students need to think rather than say because it’s not competitive games, corporative. They work together. I give them a task. In order to finish
the task, they must discuss how they, how they say a sentence with stress, with words should be stressed. Ah it’s hard to explain now

172 R: Yeah yeah.
173 I: Because.
174 R: I know this. And one question is that. And uh can you tell me about your students ah have another chance to enhance their pronunciation skills and speaking skills beside your subject?
175 I: I think other subjects, they have the chance to speak English, too. For other subjects, most of them have a presentation. For example, reading class, they have, sometimes they make presentations. Ah.
176 R: How do you know this?
177 I: Because I’m in charge of two reading classes. Uh[...]
178 R: [how] often do they make presentation in the classroom?
179 I: Uh not very often, not very often [because…]
180 R: [once, once] a month you m[ean] =
181 I: auh [h]
182 R: = or once a semester?
183 I: once or twice a semester because …skill, they need practicing still [reading]
184 R: Yeah. It depends on teachers. They have strategies. They focus on pronunciation skills and speaking skills, and they let their students make presentations about [uh…] =
185 I: [yeah]
186 R: = not a process or the policy from the English department
187 I Yeah. Not the policy. If teachers’ right to, to make their students give presentations or not.
188 R: uh yeah [it] =
189 I: [uh]
190 R: = it’s up to you it’s up
191 I: Yeah, it’s a syllabus. Ok you can ask them to make presentation or giving some tests are ok.
192 R: Yeah.
193 I: Uh groups are ok.
194 R: Yeah.
195 I: And for other subjects such as speaking, before we are, we start to read a text, ah sometimes, we have a small discussion. I ask some questions.
R: How about phonetics and phonology? They have a good chance to enhance their pronunciation skills regarding their speaking skills?

I: They have a chance to practice brainstorming and speaking. When they come to class, they answer my questions. Ah most of the time, because of the reading class, I try to, try to give guides or correct their ideas they proca rather than their speaking skills and gesture and pronunciation because of the reading class. So, sometimes, I correct them, but not very often, not very often.

R: Ok. Thank you so much for your participation in this project. Thank you so much.

I: Yeah. You’re welcome.

INTERVIEW 4’S TRANSCRIPT

1 R: Hi, how are you doing?
2 I: Great. Thanks. And you?
3 R: Good. Thank you. uh you’re ready for the interview, aren’t you?
4 I: Sure.
5 R: Now let me know something about you and your students
6 I: oh, Yeah, I am a lecturer of general linguistics here for nine years and I am also a lecture of general English in another university in this city.
7 R: Hm.
8 I: Uh about my students from the English departments. Uh, uh our first year students have 7 year experience in learning English. They are taught, uh trained to be teachers of English, translators and interpreters. Uh in general, they are very good at English in terms of grammar, reading and writing. However, their speaking and listening skills, uh uh, to be honest are not good.
9 R: Really? Uh, what do you think about the fact that a majority of university students can not use their English in verbal communication with foreigners?
10 I: communication with foreigners? Uh It is the point I am really concerned about. You know many of them are too shy. Perhaps they have no chance to talk to foreigners. I could say that many of them have never spoken English to foreigners.
11 R: Haven’t they?
12 I: Yes. I’m sure about that. You know in this department, for over seven months, only one foreign teacher from Belgum observed first-year student class for two periods, uh about 90 minutes and spent sometime talking to hundreds of our students. This seems to be only one chance for our students to use their English to communicate with foreigners.
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13 R: hm, uh how about opportunities outside the university? Uh they have a lot of chance to interact with foreigners in English?
14 I: Not really. They have the chance. But a few of them are active to talk with foreigners, uh particularly those, I think, who live in this city.
15 R: and how bout the students from other cities?
16 I: I could say that most of them are shy, passive to express their ideas even in the classroom.
17 R: Hm, uh another reason for weaknesses in their oral competence?
18 I: Pardon?
19 R: uh …, I mean besides the reason for weaknesses in speaking and listening skills since they have no chance to communicate with foreigners, what is another reason for this?
20 I: Well, uh another reason is that they were not taught about pronunciation skills, speaking skills and listening skills before.
21 R: hm. Uh, are there any relationships between pronunciation skills and general linguistics you are in charge of?
22 I: Sure. The general linguistics include phonetics, phonology, syntax, grammar and forth.
23 R: Hm, uh what are you teaching in phonetics and phonology?
24 I: Uh, we aim at providing our students with theory about sounds, vowels, consonants, how to produce them and distinguish them systematically. I still give them basic rules about assimilation, intonation and connected sounds.
25 R: to be on the safe side, what aspects of phonetics and phonology do you emphasize on in your instruction?
26 I: uh, just theory about articulation of sounds: place of articulation and manner of articulation, assimilation and deletion in oral speech.
27 R: Hm, uh when are your students taught about the General linguistics? First year, second year students?
28 I: Second year students
29 R: Do you think that your students feel confident to communicate with foreigners when they have attained such knowledge in pronunciation related to speaking and listening skills?
30 I: uh, it’s hard to say. I think it is up to each individual. Uh, you know, to my experience, some of final year students are confident to talk with foreigners.
31 R: What do you mean by some? How many of them?
32 I: ha ha I’m not sure. Hm about one fourth.
33 R: Hm. Could you tell me what difficulties uh you and your colleagues have faced uh in
the subjects regarding pronunciation skills such as listening skills, speaking skills and
phonetics?
34 I: As I told you before. They are shy and they come from different cities
35 R: Yeah, uh do you really think shyness and different regional backgrounds are really a
matter?
36 I: Yes, I think so. Uh you know those who come from other cities or provinces were
previously taught about pronunciation and they had no chance to speak English [even..]
37 R [you] mean the students who were born and have lived here got
pronunciation instruction at high school?
38 I: Uh uh actually, like other places, pronunciation is not taught at high school in this
city except few schools for gifted students, such as Le Hong Phong, Tran Dai Nghia.
[And Uh] =
39 R: [Uh you mea]n
40 I: In fact, there are many foreign language schools and centers in Ho Chi Minh City. I
think. Saigoners have good opportunities to improve their speaking and pronunciation
skills over here.
41 R: Hm, yeah, I think so. Uh, what other difficulties besides uh shyness and different
regional background ? For instance, a big class is another concern?
42 I: Yeah. It is another difficulty we have. for listening and speaking subjects, our
colleagues find it hard to control a very huge class.
43 R: How many students are there in each class?
44 I: Uh three of the five classes have more than 50 students and the others have 45
students.
45 R: Crowded. Uh as I know there were 30 students in each class. The policy has been
changed, hasn’t it.
46 I: Maybe, I think the number of students this year uh is twice as many as the number
was previous uh, uh in previous years. Besides, because the main campus is being
repaired, extended. We do not have enough room. So we increase the number of students
in each class.
47 R: Hm, I see. I know, it is said that you are in charge of teaching speaking skills to
students from the college of economics. The class is as crowded as it is over here.
48 I: Yeah, as usual, it is so crowded. There are 55 or 60 students in one class
Could you tell me how you have addressed the problems during your English speaking instruction related to pronunciation skills?

Uh well, its complicated. You know, I often classify class into many groups of eight uh or ten in the speaking class. Uh uh active students usually from this city are chosen as a team leader, and I hope that uh they can motivate the other members in their group uh especially from other cities uh and those who, who are shy to express their ideas or discuss something in English.

Could you tell me about the active students? Who are they?

Sure, they are often from Ho Chi Minh City. Their speaking skills are often better than other students’ because they have more chances to use their verbal English with their teachers or classmates in English centres around Saigon.

Do you think that their speaking skills are good enough to communicate with foreigners.

Uhh, actually, uh I don’t think so. For me they seldom talk to foreigners. I could say that they speak English to their teachers or classmates.

Foreign teachers or Vietnamese teachers?

Uh according to me, both, but uh, actually, usually with Vietnamese teachers?

Hm, uh but there are many foreign teachers who come from England, Australia, America, Singapore, Malaysia are teaching English in this city. Uh I mean

Uhh you know, few of Saigonese students go to English schools or centers where foreign teachers are teaching English, uh because it is very expensive. I think these places are suitable for the rich.

Hm, I couldn’t agree more..uh, uh let’s return the question, pronunciation is currently taught in your class. Uh could you tell me how you correct their mistakes?

To be honest, it is hard to do so. You know, the class is big and time is limited, two periods only in my lecture. I often go around the classroom and join each group and try to listen to what they are saying. If I realise their mistakes, I will give corrections right away in the group, but I have no time to join all the groups.

Good. What kinds of mistakes do you focus on?

Well, as usual, words are pronounced wrongly, and I correct them.

you mean consonants, vowels or stress are what you focus on in your lectures?

Yeah, usually, final consonants, consonants do not exist in Vietnamese, vowels and wrong stress.

How about intonation and rhythm?
I: Intonation? Seldom. To be honest, I have no time to pay attention to other pronunciation mistakes such as intonation or rhythm.

R: Uh, uh what else have you done to improve your students’ pronunciation skills?

I: Well, I let them practice listening to video, cd uh or English films at home.

R: Do you ever use recordings from authentic conversations between foreigners, particularly native English speakers in your lecture?

I: What a pity! I have never used this uh teaching aid in my speaking and general linguistics classes. Uh for speaking class, I depend on speaking text books or give them a topic from IELTS or TOEFL text books which are available on the market.

R: Hm, uh one more question I would like to ask you is: what aspects of pronunciation have been explicitly taught in your lectures, both in your general linguistics and speaking subjects?

I: As I told you before, consonants, vowels, stress and basic rules in intonation are the main aspects that I emphasize in my lectures.

R: Hm. Thank you so much for your participation.

I: You’re welcome.
APPENDIX 7: TRANSCRIPTS OF THE STUDENTS’ INTERVIEWS

TRANSCRIPT OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 1

1 R: Hi! How are you
2 I: I’m fine. Thanks.
3 R: Could you please tell me something about you and your English learning Background?
4 I: Yes. I am 19 years old. I have learned English for over seven years.
5 R: seven years
6 I: Yes
7 R: What did you learn?
8 I: Uh, I learned English such as vocabulary and sentence pattern
9 R: Reading and grammar?
10 I: Yeah
11 R: Do you feel confident to communicate with foreigners in English?
12 I: uh I am not confident to do so
13 R: Why not?
14 I: Because my speaking skill is not very good
15 R: limited?
16 I: Yes.
17 R: Why limited?
18 I: Because the speaking skill was not taught
19 R: How about pronunciation skills?
20 I: Not either
21 R: You have learned English here for over a semester. Do you think your English speaking skill is better?
22 I: Yeah, a bit better.
23 R: Could you tell me what difficulties you have had to enhance your verbal communication with foreigners?
24 I: My hometown is a suburb, far away from this city. So I did not have an opportunity to speak English. Another difficulty is that I do not know how native English speaker speaks English, how they pronounce words. It is hard to understand them and to speak English, too.
25 R: Hm. Uh, which skills do you think you are bad at?
27. R: Why?
28. I: Because I have a problem with pronunciation and listening.
29. R: Hm. Do you have any chance to speak English with foreigners?
30. I: Yeah, but I once met a foreigner
31. R: Did you speak English to the foreigner?
32. I: Yes, but not much. He tried to understand what I was speaking.
33. R: Where did he come from.
34. I: He was French.
35. R: In this campus or outside the university.
37. R: Have foreign teachers ever taken part in teaching English to you?
38. I: Yeah, rarely. One foreign teacher came to my class, but I did not have any chance to talk to him.
39. R: Do you expect to speak English confidently with foreigners?
40. I: Yeah, of course.
41. R: How?
42. I: I have to practice speaking English a lot, particularly improve my pronunciation skills.
43. R: Do you think your current teachers such as speaking teacher, listening teacher and phonetics teacher) assist you a lot to improve your speaking and pronunciation skills?
44. I: Yeah.
45. R: What have they taught you?
46. I: As for speaking class, my teacher let the whole class speak English to each other or speak in class.
47. R: Hm. Do you think you have any chance to express your ideas in English in the classroom?
48. I: Yes, a lot.
49. R: How have your pronunciation mistakes been corrected?
50. I: Whenever the teacher recognizes a certain student’s mistakes, she corrects them.
51. R: how can she take care of 61 students?
52. I: during 90 minutes, few students are offered the chance to speak English.
53. R: Few students speak and the others keep silent, right?
54. I: Uh only the mistakes made by the speakers are corrected by the teacher.
TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 2

1 R: Hi! How are you
2 I: I’m fine. Thanks.
3 R: Could you please tell me something about you and your English learning background?
4 I: Yes. Name is Dung. Now, I am 19 years old. I have learned English since I was in year 6. I live here and I am currently student who major in English for teachers
5 R: As for English, what did you learn at school?
6 I: I learned new words, sentence patterns at school as well as at home
7 R: Did you learn grammar and reading?
8 I: Yes. And pronunciation, we didn’t learn pronunciation at all, but I learned it at a foreign language centre.
9 R: About speaking and listening?
10 I: Not at all.
11 R: You mean grammar and reading are what you were taught?
12 I: Yes and vocabulary
13 R: And vocabulary. That’s it. Briefly-speaking, pronunciation was not taught at all, wasn’t it?
14 I: Yes, that’s right. Teachers just pronounced new words, but they did not explain how they were produced. So, we did not know how to pronounce the new words
15 R: Do you feel confident to speak English with foreigners?
16 I: Uh, when I see a foreigner, **I do want to start a conversation with him, but I am afraid** because my English is limited because I don’t know how to express my ideas. I am interested in talking with foreigners.

17 R: Do you ever talk to foreigners?

18 I: Yes, but **I talk about simple things such as, what’s your name, where do you come from? What’s your job? That’s all. I cannot talk more?**

19 R: Because you rarely use your English in communication with foreigners, don’t you?

20 I: Yeah

21 R: How often do you communicate with foreigners?

22 I: Not often because I have little chance.

23 R: How many times have you contacted foreigners since you were a student of this university in September, 2010.

24 I: **Three times**

25 R: Three times, they were foreigners, weren’t they?

26 I: Yeah.

27 R: Were they teachers?

28 I: No, outside the university.

29 R: Hm, **outside the university**

30 They needed my help. They asked me and I answered

31 R: **In this university, there are no foreign teachers, aren’t there?**

32 I: No. Uh outside the university, I bump into one foreigner, but I’m afraid

33 R: Can you tell me about difficulties you have to enhance your speaking and pronunciation skills?

34 I: Yes, **There is nobody for me to practice. Secondly, I practice speaking English by myself and I don’t know whether my pronunciation is right or wrong. Thirdly, I am shy to go out to contact foreigners.**

35 R: How do you think your English pronunciation skills are for over seven months you have spent studying English in this university?

37 I: **I can understand what my teacher speaks, but my pronunciation is still not good.**

R: Hm because the class is crowded, isn’t it.

38 I: Yes, crowded. **Secondly, my teachers let the whole class discuss something in English. However, it is rare to talk to each other in English but in Vietnamese instead.**
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

39 R Hm.
40 I: whenever the teachers call my name, I have to speak English. Then, the teachers try to listen to me and they predict what I am saying. So, there is little chance to correct our mistakes.
41 R: You mean in groups, students speak in Vietnamese to each other in the speaking class, don’t they?
42 I: Yeah
43 R: Not in English, right?
44 I: YES, but sometimes in English
45 R: How do you teachers correct students’ mistakes?
46 I: Whenever teachers recognize students’ mistakes, they ask us to pronounce words produced wrongly over until we are right.
47 R: What mistakes do they often correct? Consonants, vowels…?
48 I: Consonants and vowels, we are shown how to use speech organs such as the tongue, the lips to produce the sounds.
49 R: Hm. how about intonation, stress, rhythm?
50 I: Intonation, basic rules on intonation such as Yes no questions, statement and so on are been taught in classroom. And they teach us how to show our emotion while we are speaking. We have limited time in class. So they often encourage us to practice speaking English at home.
51 R: Mistakes are just corrected for those who volunteer or are asked by teachers to stand up and speak in class, aren’t they?
52 I: That’s right.
53 R: Do you think you can enhance your pronunciation skills in reading, listening and writing class?
54 I: uh, I don’t think so because, we have no time to speak English in these subjects.
55 R: Thank you so much for your assistance with my research project.
56 I: That’s all right.

TRANSCRIPT OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 3

1 R: Hi, how are you? you feel good?
2 I: Yeah, I am good. I am ok after eating lunch. Thank you. How about you?
3 R: I’m fine. Thanks. Now let me know something about you and your English learning background.
I: Yes. I’m 19 years old. I have learned English for seven years, actually eight years. I was previously taught about grammar, sentence patterns and reading and stress. I was shown how to put a stress on the syllable of multi-syllabic words.

R: What English skills were mainly emphasized in English instruction at high school, speaking, listening, pronunciation, reading or grammar?

I: Grammar.

R: Grammar?

I: Yes and pronunciation.

R: How about reading?

I: Yes, but we were encouraged to practice reading at home.

R: What aspects of pronunciation were taught at high school?

I: Uh, for example, I was shown how to place a stress on the first syllable, or second syllable or third syllable of multi-syllabic words. I was shown some rules of doing so.

R: Hm, how about consonants, vowels?

I: Yeah.

R: How about intonation?

I: Rarely.

R: Do you feel confident to communicate with foreigners in English?

I: Uh no, I am not confident at all because I think my English is not good enough to talk to foreigners.

R: What do you mean by saying my English is not good enough? in what way?

I: For example vocabulary in economy.

R: Do you have any chance to contact foreigners?

I: Yes, I have.

R: How often?

I: Uh, I am afraid and shy to contact them. Uh about three times.

R: Since then.

I: Since I started learning English.

R: What did you often talk?

I: Uh about giving directions, occupations. Generally-speaking, simple matters.

R: How about this university, do you have currently any chance to contact foreigners?

I: Yes. My teacher used to take foreign teachers to our class and we talked to each other.
R: How many times have you met foreign teachers since you started studying English in this university in September, 2010.

I: Several times

R: Several times? How many?

I: He he one time only.

R: Can you tell me what difficulties you have to enhance your speaking and pronunciation skills?

I: Uh the difficulty is that I cannot understand what is said by foreigners because perhaps I lack of vocabulary. Uh I’m not sure.

R: Which skills are you weak in?

I: Listening skill?

R: How about speaking skill?

I: Yes and speaking skill.

R: What have you currently been taught to enhance your pronunciation and speaking skills?

I: Currently, my teachers ask us to stand up to read a text or play roles in a conversation and whenever pronunciation mistakes are recognized, corrections will give to the mistakes. Uh, whenever we are given a listening text, our teachers show us how to pronounce new words.

R: Your class is very crowded, isn’t it?

I: Yeah.

R: Several students have the chance to stand up and speak in class. So, their mistakes are recognized and corrected. How about the other students?

I: It depends. A text consists of several questions or sentences. Each group has a chance to read one or two sentences or answer one or two questions.

R: How many students are there in a group? And how many of them have the chance to speak during two periods?

I: Nine or ten students, often one or two of the students have such an opportunity.

R: Hm, uh what aspects of pronunciation have been taught?

I: Uh, uh…

R: For example in listening or speaking subjects, what aspects of pronunciation and how they have been taught to enhance these skills?

I: Uh vowels, consonants and stress

R: What kinds of mistakes are often corrected?
53 I: Uh uh.. mistakes are corrected by showing how to produce sounds, final sounds or words.
54 R: Besides, what other kinds of pronunciation mistakes are corrected in class?
55 I: Uh, hu
56 R: Intonation?
57 I: Yes yes, for example, teachers show how intonation should be used in questions. Generally speaking, they focus on mistakes of vowels, consonants and stress.
58 R: Hm. Thank you for your participation.
59 R: You’re welcome.

**TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 4**

1 R: Hi! How are you today?
2 I: I’m well. Thanks.
3 R: May I have something about you and your English learning background?
4 I: My name is Kim Thoa. I will be 19 years old in May this year. I am now a student here, and my major is English for teachers. I have been interested in English since I was a little girl. I had not started learning English until I was year 6. Briefly-speaking, I have learned English for over seven years.
5 R: Hm at high school, what aspects of English did you learn?
6. I: Uh, We had to study what were designed in English textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education.
7. R: What do you mean? You mean grammar and reading, right?
8. I: Yes. Grammar and reading and pronunciation
9 R: Do you feel confident to talk to foreigners?
10 I: Uh, I’m not confident uh because we very rarely contact foreigners while we are studying English. So, I am embarrassed or shy to talk to foreigners.
11 R: Do you think your pronunciation is a problem in communication with foreigners.
12 I: Yes, I think so. My pronunciation is a problem, a big problem uh because perhaps there are so many students in my class, and my teachers cannot take care of all.
13 R: what aspects of pronunciation were taught at high school?
14 I: We were asked pronounce new words after the teachers two or three times.
15 R: How about intonation.
16 I: Yes but intonation is considered as part of grammar. We were shown about basic rules, concepts of intonation so that we would be able to solve this problem in multiple-choice question exams. In fact, we do not practice using intonation.

17 R: You were asked to repeat new words written on the blackboard after the teacher weren’t you?

18 I: Yes. That’s right

19 R: Let me know about what difficulties you have in enhancement of your pronunciation?

20 I: Uh, I am passive. I’m afraid that my pronunciation mistakes are revealed while I am speaking. So I am afraid of speaking English.

21 R: What skills do you think you are worst at?

22 I: I think listening uh and speaking.

23 R: Do you think pronunciation has a great influence on your speaking and listening skills?

24 I: Yeah, I couldn’t agree with you more.

25 R: Do you feel that your pronunciation and speaking skills have been better after seven months in studying English here?

26 I: Yeah, a bit better because in this university, listening and speaking skills have been taught while they were ignored at high school.

27 R: Do you ever have any chance to speak English with foreigners? Are there any foreign teachers teaching English here?

28 I: Uh, yeah, only one foreign teacher named David were in charge of teaching English.

29 R: Did you talk to him?

30 I: Oh, no. because there are 55 students in my class. So, few of us had the chance to talk to him.

31 R: As for speaking and listening, what and how have they been instructed to support your pronunciation skills?

32 I: In the listening class, we are asked to listen to the recordings from which native speakers say and in the speaking class, we are asked to discuss topics in English from the textbook. I think these subjects have supported my pronunciation because they were not taught at high school.

33 R: Were your pronunciation mistakes corrected by your teachers?

34 I: Yes.

35 R: A lot?
36 I: So much.
38 R: In such a big class, how have your teachers taken care of all?
39 I: Ah, she (speaking teacher) let us speak English to each other in groups and she moved around and tried to listen to us.
40 R: She recognized mistakes and corrected them right away in groups, didn’t they?
41 I: Yes, she did.
42 R: What kinds of pronunciation mistakes were mainly corrected?
43 I: Uh, consonants and vowels.
44 R: How about stress, intonation, rhythm?
45 I: Uh, intonation, but sometimes.
46 R: What did she correct about intonation?
47 I: Uh how to raise or low your voice properly.
48 R: Hm. Thank you so much for your participation
49 I: It’s my pleasure.

TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 5
1 R: Hi! How are you?
2 I: I’m fine. Thanks
3 R: I am sorry that I let you wait for quite a while.
4 I: That’s all right.
5 R: Could you tell me something about you and your English learning background?
6 I: Yeah. I’m 19 years old. As other students, I have learned English for over seven years.
7 R: What do you major in here?
8 I: My major is English for teachers.
9 R: You will be a teacher, won’t you?
10 I: Yes, I will.
11 R: What aspects of English were taught at high school?
12 I: Grammar, reading and writing.
13 R: And speaking and listening?
14 I: Uh, including listening, but rarely
15 R: How about pronunciation.
16 I: Yes, pronunciation was also taught
17 R: What aspects of pronunciation were taught?
18 I: new words from reading texts. We are all asked to pronounce new words after the teacher.

19 R: Did your teachers correct your pronunciation mistakes?

20 I: Not at all. We were asked to repeat the new words after the teacher.

21 R: You mean the whole class repeated the new words after the teacher?

22 I: Yes, that’s right.

23 R: Do you feel confident to speak English with foreigners?

24 I: No, I don’t.

25 R: Why not?

26 I: Because my pronunciation is still bad and my listening skill is too.

27 R: Have you ever contacted foreigners?

28 I: Not yet.

29 R: You mean you have not spoken English to foreigners?

30 I: That’s right.

31 R: Are there any foreign teachers coming and teaching English to your class?

32 I: Yes, but only one foreign teacher came and taught English to my class. At that time, I did not speak English to him because my class is crowded.

33 R: Why don’t you contact foreigners outside the campus?

34 I: Because I am shy and not confident.

35 R: Do you ever speak English to your classmates?

36 I: Yes.

37 R: pronunciation has been taught in your class, hasn’t it?

38 I: Yes.

39 R: What aspects of pronunciation have currently been taught in your class?

40 I: Stressed sounds in multi-syllabic words, consonants and vowels.

41 R: What skills do you think you are worst at?

42 I: I think listening uh and speaking as well as pronunciation.

43 R: Let me know what difficulties you have faced to enhance your speaking and pronunciation skills?

44 I: Uh uh, it’s hard to say.

45 R: Lack of vocabulary?

46 I: Yes, lack of vocabulary and pronunciation, particularly how to put a stress on a certain sound from multi-syllabic words.

47 R: Do your current teachers correct pronunciation mistakes?
An inquiry into the impact of the mother tongue on Vietnamese adult EFL learners’ speech intelligibility with reference to syllable structure

48 I: Uh, yes, but not much
49 R: What will you do to improve your pronunciation and communication skills?
50 I: I think I have to improve my vocabulary and pronunciation at the same time
51 R: how will you do so? You will come out and talk to foreigners?
52 I: Uh, I will speak English to my classmates more often.
53 R: hm. Good. Thank you so much for your cooperation.
54 I: That’s all right.

Transcripts of student’s interview 6
1 R: Hi! You have just had lunch?
2 I: Yeah, he he.
3 R: You’re ready for the interview, aren’t you?
4 I: Yeah, he he.
5. R: Could you please tell me something about you and your English learning background?
6 I: Yeah, I am now 19 years old. I come from a poor family residing in another province. My parents encouraged me to study well and let me learn English when I was year 2. They expected me to become a teacher of English in the future. So, I have made special efforts to study hard to pass the university entrance exam.
7 R: Amazing! Uh you have learned English for over ten years. What skills were you taught?
9 I: Teachers mainly focused on grammar and reading because semester exams and final exams were based on grammar and reading.
10 R: How about speaking and pronunciation?
11 I: Yeah, just concepts of pronunciation
12 R: What do mean by concepts of pronunciation?
13 I: I mean pronunciation was considered part of grammar. You know in a multiple choice question grammar test, we were asked to place a stress on a certain syllable of a multi-syllabic word or distinguish voiceless and voiced sounds. So we were shown some tips to do so.
14 R: You mean you did not use your speech organs to pronounce multi-syllabic words and sounds.
15 I: Nearly right. Uh, teacher often wrote new words on the blackboard and let the whole class repeat them after her two times only.
R: You mean pronunciation was demonstrated by writing

I: Yeah by writing not speaking or producing sounds

R: Hm. What aspects of pronunciation were designed as part of grammar?

I: Mainly stressed sounds, vowels and consonants, particularly final sounds

R: Uh, do you think you have the chance to speak English over here, this university?

I: I come from another province. So my communication competence is not as good as those who live here. At first, teachers spoke English so much in my class, and I was shocked about this. They realize this matter and sometimes they spoke Vietnamese.

R: How many times have you spoken English with foreigners since you were a student of this university?

I: Uh several times. I went out with friends to tourist places where I thought there were many foreigners. So I had the chance to talk to them. Yeah, two times I think.

R: Good, what did you say to them?

I: Just simple sentences such as where do you come from? What do you think of Vietnam.

R: Do you think you feel confident to communicate with foreigners?

I: No. I am shy. Uh, I’m afraid I speak English in wrong way and they misunderstood what I intend to convey. Therefore, I just use simple words I am sure I am right in pronunciation.

R: Let me know about what difficulties you have in enhancement of your speaking and pronunciation skills?

I: The first difficulty I could say is we were previously taught about pronunciation and speaking skills. So we are not self-confident to use English in verbal communication. Perhaps, I think it’s hard for foreigners to understand what I spoke.

R: Do you ever have any chance to talk to foreigners right here in this campus, I mean?

I: Yeah, but it’s rare. You know one foreign teacher named Dave or David, I can’t remember, came to class and talked to the whole class. However, we talk alittle because the foreign teachers talked much and we just listened and raised some questions.

R: There has been only one foreign teachers coming and talking to the whole class since you started learning English here in September, 2010, hasn’t there?

I: Yeah, only one time for seven months.

R: What aspects of pronunciation are the major focus in speaking and listening classes?
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35  I: Intonation, we have been shown how to raise or lower voice accompanied with relevant emotion, consonants, vowels and clusters.

36  R: You mean they mainly focus these aspects in their instruction, right?

37  I: Yes, that’s right.

R: R: Hm, thank you so much for your participation in this research project.

I: I: It’s my pleasure.

TRANSCRIPTS OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 7

1  R. Hi! How are you today?

2  I: I’m fine. Thanks.

3  R: Uh, could you please tell me something about you and your English learning background?

4  I: Uh, I am 19 years old. As other students, I have learned English for over seven years. I don’t know other students. For me, I have contacted many foreigners in English.

5  R: Good. Uh, What aspect of English were you taught at high school?, Grammar, reading, writing, speaking or listening?

6  I: Mainly grammar uh and reading comprehension.

7  R: Why?

8  I: Because semester exams and final exams are based on grammar and reading.

9  R: How about pronunciation? Was it taught?

10 I: Uh yes, a little. Rarely did they mention to pronunciation in their lectures.

11 R: Hm. What aspects of pronunciation were taught?

12 I: Uh, we were shown how to put stress on a certain syllable of a multi-syllabic word.
And we were asked to pronounce the multi-syllabic word with after the teacher. We were also taught about intonation.

13 R: Hm. What else? How about Consonants and vowels?

14 I: Yes, but not often.

15 R: Hm. You have contacted foreigners, haven’t you?

16 IYeah. Many times.

17 R: Could you tell me some more about this?

18 I: Yeah, I once talked to a French person, an American person, an English person, Spanish person and so forth. Right now I am contacting a Malaysian.
R: Good, so good. Uh, Have you had any chance to speak English with Foreigners lately?
I: Yeah. I have contacted two foreigners for the last two weeks.
R: Outside the university?
I: Yes outside the campus.
R: **How about in your university, you are offered any chance to communicate with foreigners?**
I: Yes, but not much. We have had one chance since we started learning English here in September 2010.
R: Hm, how many periods did the foreign teacher teach English in your class?
I: Just two periods.
R: Do you feel confident to talk to foreigners?
I: Oh Yes
R: You are a special one. Other students are shy? Are you afraid of speaking English to foreigners?
I: No. I am very interested in talking to foreigners because, I think when I speak English wrongly, they are willing to correct my mistakes.
R: So good. what skills do you think you are worst at?
I: Uh pronunciation, I think.
R: Why?
I: I speak fast. So, I don’t know whether I speak rightly or wrongly.
R: hm. **Is pronunciation currently taught?**
I: Yes, but in speaking class.
R: What aspects of pronunciation have been taught?
I: We were shown how to produce strange sounds of new words and how to put a stress, and we are always asked to repeat new words after the teacher.
R: What else?
I: Uh uh.
R: Try to remember what other aspects have been taught?
I: Uh intonation. We were shown how to raise or fall voice accompanied with relevant emotion while speaking English.
R: Can you give an example?
I: Uh for example, “would you like to come out with me, tonight?”
R: By rising voice at the end?
I: Yes. That’s right.

R: your teacher let you pronounce new words after her or a CD recorder?

I: After her without the cd recorder.

R: Hm you said, you have contacted foreigners for several times. Could you tell me what you have learned from these contacts?

I: Yes. I think I have learned a lot. Besides my pronunciation is improved, I learn their cultures, their lifestyles and their behavior.

R: How much could you understand what a foreigner talked to you?

I: About 70 percent.

R: Oh so good. Do you find any difference of English teaching and learning between the current university and high school?

I: At high school, English instruction was based on a teacher-centred model. Here I can act on my own initiative. We are classified into groups and we speak English to each other in our groups.

R: hm. How many students are there in a group?

I: Ten students.

R: Let’s return to the question I have asked you. What aspects of pronunciation are the main focus in your teachers’ lectures?

I: Consonants, vowels, stressed sounds and basic rules of intonation.

R: What skills do you emphasize?

I: Speaking.

R: Why?

I: You know, I am trained to be a teacher, but I wish to do another job afterwards. You know I also want to be a tourist guide. So I am very interested in speaking skill.

R: Hm, I see. Thank so much for your cooperation.

I: It’s my pleasure.

TRANS script OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 8

R: Hi, are you hungry?

I: No. I’m full. I’ve just had lunch.

R: Good. Let me know something about you and your English learning background?

I: I was born in 1992. Now I’m 19 years. I started learning English in year 6. That is, I have learned English for over seven years. At high school, we taught grammar and
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reading according to the textbooks provided by the Ministry of Education. You know, we were required to take and pass grammar-reading –based exams.

5 R: You just learned grammar, writing and reading.

6 I: No writing. Just grammar, reading and vocabulary

7 R: Hm was pronunciation taught at high school?

8 I: Yeah. We were asked to repeat new words after teachers.

9 R: Did they explain how to pronounce new words?

10 I: Not at all. The whole class was asked to pronounce new words written on the blackboard after the teachers several times.

11 R: Hm do you ever speak English to foreigners?

12 I: Yes only one time in my class.

13 R: How about speaking English to foreigners outside the university?

14 I: Yes, but I am shy. I just bump into foreigners on streets. You know it’s hard to start a conversation. Moreover, I am so shy.

15 R: You don’t feel confident to talk to foreigners, do you?

16 I: o because my English is not good enough.

17 R: What do you mean?

18 I: I lack of vocabulary and I am shy.

19 R: What difficulties you have to enhance your pronunciation and speaking skills?

20 I: I am seldom asked to speak in class because it is crowded.

21 R: How many students are there in your class?

22 I: 61.

23 R: What is your major?

24 I: I major in English for teachers. I will be a teacher of English in future.

25 R: Hm. What skills do you think are the most important ones?

26 I: I think communicative skill

27 R: Why don’t you improve such a skill?

28 I: I think it takes time

29 R: Who do you often speak English in class?

30 I: To my classmates

31 R: And to your teachers?

32 I: Not much. The chance comes when I was asked to answer their questions.

33 R: Few students have the chance to answer their teachers’ question, do they?

34 I: Yeah. I try to volunteer to answer their questions.
R: How have your pronunciation mistakes recognized and corrected?

I: We are encouraged to speak to each other in groups. It is often that mistakes are recognized and corrected to each other in our group. If those are called to stand up and answer the teacher’s question make mistakes, their mistakes are corrected by the teacher.

R: What kinds of mistakes are often corrected?

I: Words which are pronounced wrongly such as consonants, and stressed sounds.

R: Hm how about intonation and rhythm mistakes?

I: Rarely. Mainly corrections are give to consonant and vowel errors.

R: Hm how many English subjects are you required to take?

I: Five subjects such as writing, reading, grammar, speaking and listening. At university, I find that I have the chance to improve my speaking, listening and pronunciation skills, which were not taught at high school.

R: Yeah, I couldn’t agree more. Thank you for your participation in this research project.

I: You’re welcome.

TRANSCRIPT OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 9

R: Hi you’re fine, aren’t you?

I: Yes, I’m ok.

R: Hm, could you please tell me something about you and your English learning background?

I: I’m now 19 years old. I come from Long An. I have learned English since I was a year 6 student.

R: Over seven years?

I: Yes, over seven years

R: what aspects of English were you taught at high school?

I: uh Grammar and reading were the main focus on their English instruction since semester exams, final exams and university exams are based on these subjects.

R: and other skills such as speaking and pronunciation

I: uh, Rarely. Just new words were pronounced by the whole class after the teacher. We don’t seem to know how to produce words. We were not shown how to read phonetic transcriptions.

R: Hm. How about intonation?
I: Not at all.
R: Was Vietnamese applied to teach English at high school?
I: Yes, very often. Teacher used English to explain grammatical rules, translate reading text?
R: Was English spoken to each other in class?
I: Uh, I think we never spoke English. You know, English was spoken whenever those who were asked to answer the teacher’s questions
R: Do you have any chance to speak English now?
I: Yes, I sometimes speak English to my classmates. Here my teachers encourage us to speak English.
R: Good. Have you ever talked to foreigners?
I: Yeah I am lucky to speak English with my cousin who was born and has lived in the USA. She helps me to correct my pronunciation mistakes.
R: How about foreigners? Do you have the chance to communicate with foreigners?
I: Yes I also study Chinese with a Spanish man. Sometimes, I speak English to him, but I don’t know what to speak.
R: Foreign teachers once came to your class and talked to you, didn’t they?
I: Yes one foreign teacher sat in on my class and spent one period talking to the whole class, but I didn’t have the chance to speak to him because my class is crowded.
R: You mean he did not teach English but observed?
I: He just observed my class. It was said that he was the final year student, who majored in English for teachers like us.
R: Hmm, I see. How many students are there in your class?
I: Over 50.
R: Do you feel confident to communicate with foreigners in English?
I: No, I am still shy. To be honest, I have never taught to foreigners in society. You know I don’t know what to say and my pronunciation is not good.
R: What skills do you think you are worst at?
I: Listening and speaking skills.
R: Do you speak English to your classmates in class?
I: It is rare to speak English to my classmates.
R: How about other students? They speak English in your class?
I: I think a majority of them speak Vietnamese instead. Just some of them speak English.

R: Outside classroom, You and your classmates speak English to each other, don’t they?

I: No, rarely.

R: In the speaking class, English is spoken by your teacher all the time, isn’t it?

I: Often in English, but sometimes in Vietnamese when she finds us hard to understand what she is saying.

R: Who talks more – your teachers or you and your classmates?

I: In general, teachers talk more. Particularly those who are in charge of teaching listening, reading, writing and grammar talk more than those who are teaching speaking subjects.

R: In the speaking class, do you have the chance to speak English to your classmates and your teacher?

I: Not much, speaking class meets for 90 minutes. Half of the time the teacher talks because she has to explain what to say whereas we are asked to speak in groups.

R: How many students are there in a group?

I: Nine or ten.

R: How have your pronunciation mistakes been recognized and corrected?

I: Mistakes are recognized and corrected to each other in our group.

R: How do your teachers correct your mistakes and your classmates’ mistakes?

I: In the speaking class, the teacher moves around and comes to each group. When she recognizes our mistakes while we are speaking in our group, she gives corrections right away. The teacher spends the last ten or 15 minutes in asking two or three students to stand up and speak and correcting their mistakes if any to the whole class.

R: Do you have such an opportunity?

I: Yes.

R: How often?

I: Several times.

R: Good. One more question, what skills do you emphasize most?

I: Speaking skill.

R: Why?

I: Because I really want to speak English to foreigners.

R: hm. Best luck. Thank you for your assistance with my research project.
 TRANSCRIPT OF STUDENT’S INTERVIEW 10

I: It’s my pleasure.

R: Hi. How are you?
I: I’m fine. Thanks.

R: Now let me know something about you and your English learning background?
I: I come from Vinh Long. I have learned English for over seven years. I am 20 years old. At high school, I was not taught about pronunciation. From year 6 to year 12, teachers talked much.

R: Were you taught how to speak English?
I: Yeah, in year 6 to year 8, we were taught how made simple conversations such as greetings, offering, suggestion but we did not practice speaking when we moved on to year 9 to 12.

R: You mean teachers talked and you kept silent?
I: Yeah, teachers read a text to the whole class and they asked the first student to translate the first sentence, then second student to translate the second sentence until the whole reading were translated.

R: Pronunciation was not taught at all.
I: Uh I think we were shown how to put a stress on a certain sound of a multisyllabic word, but we were provided with some rules or tips so that we could deal with this matter in multiple choice exams.

R: do you mean this aspect of pronunciation is part of grammar-based tests?
I: Yes. That’s right but not always.

R: Do you ever speak English to foreigners?
I: Yes. I haven’t contacted American or British persons but I once spoke English to some Japanese and Malaysian students.

R: Do you have any chance to speak English to foreigners in this campus?
I: yes, we have had one chance to talk to a foreign teacher since we started learning English here.

R: Hm, what did he do in your class?
I: He taught English to us.

R: Taught or observed your class.
I: He sat in on our class, but my teacher asked her to talk to the whole class.

R: What did you and your classmates speak in such a meeting?
I: We put questions and he gave answers.
R: Did he ask questions to you?
I: Yes, some questions. She encouraged us to speak English.
R: Hm Pronunciation is currently taught isn’t it?
I: Yes.
R: What aspects of pronunciation has been taught?
I: Uh, new words including consonants, vowels and stressed sounds
R: How are they taught?
I: Teachers ask the whole class to repeat new words after her two or three times and then they ask several students to pronounce them again to make sure they are produced correctly.
R: what other aspects of pronunciation are taught?
I: Intonation. We are shown how to raise voice or fall voice accompanied with emotion while we are speaking English.
R: How has it been taught and learnt? And how often?
I: Sometimes, just in speaking classes and sometimes in listening classes.
R: What skills do you think you are worst at?
I: Pronunciation skills
R: Why?
I: I think because if you want to understand what foreigners say, if you make it easy for foreigners to understand you, your pronunciation is very good.
R: hm. Do you speak English to your classmates?
I: Yes. My class is interesting. We try to speak English both inside and outside class. We try to express any ideas in English.
R: How are mistakes corrected?
I: We correct our mistakes one another. We are not sure whether we are right or wrong.
R: How are pronunciation mistakes corrected especially in speaking and listening classes?
I: I am sometimes asked to stand up and answer the teachers’ questions. If my mistakes are recognized, the teachers correct them.
R: Hm what do you mean by sometimes?
I: I think once a week
R: But your class is crowded. How can you do to be called to answer your teachers’ questions?
I: **By raising my hand**

R: **you volunteer to answer the questions**

I: Yes. That’s right.

R: hm. Thank you very much for your participation in this project.

I: Not at all.

APPENDIX 8: RATERS’ TRANSCRIPTS FROM THE INVESTIGATED COHORT OF STUDENTS.

**Rater 1**

**Students 1 -5**

**Student 5**

… … … student who has to … … ago. … … … … important … … … performing … … … … feeling confident, comfortable and organized … … academic and military like … … … … we are recognized … … … physically … … … can also be a problem (problem?!?) … … sometime …The most … … to manage … … is through … … … you need to think … … particularly after you … read an … pappo (paper?!) which you know nothing about … where you had to do … … … even if you haven’t prepared enough … you used to think … … don’t reply … other children tell you about … … they … allocate to … over years … … have been overestimate and underestimate … … … we are different so … … we need to allocate … difference … … … you need another hour, so follow up our … … … if you want to …

**Student 2**

We have no student … … understand … … both material … … … we have no student … … often the result can be … … … don’t underestimate the … … you should form a feeling confident, comfortable and … … academic … … … I’m sure you have … … stressful situation … … … can also be a problem … … … logical reason … … … particularly after you … … same paper … … … you know nothing about where you had to do … … … look at the
... even if you haven’t... enough in order to your best answer to very... don’t we lie unless other students the other play to survey... overestimate it and underestimate it. We are on different show... we need to... to students who be different... seniorly is looking... you will need another hour of... if you want to chew...

**Student 3**

... student who has both understanding up the subject... where below is the... the very little work and... colors often can be best... artist... the important... feeling confident, comfortable and... not only... they assess your... stressful situation can also be a problem or... same time... the most... way to manage... called reaction is... psychology called... the way you think... you need to think racionally particularly after you read the same paper which you know nothing about is very hard to do. Otherwise, stress can make you panic look at the question... and racionally... the question... even if you have repay well enough you still needs (needs!?) to think racionally in order to... don’t rely on what other students... tell you about time... to study the report we... over the year... have been... over... and under... that’s the time... we need to study... you need another hour... you want to achieve...

**Student 4**

An inquiry into the impact of... for students who speak... they could... who had a good understanding of the subject material...

...often the result can be both... they underestimate the important that... feeling confident, comfortable and... special academic... they are special... to perform... we... the risk of... and its risk both... in stressful situations... can also be a problem of... the same time... the more effective way to manage the... control... you can... you
need to think … … particularly after you … … … look at the questions carefully and write … …
even if you have a … you still have to think … … in order to … … circumstance. Don’t rely on what other students tell you about … … to study … … the report … over the years has been … particularly over … … we are different, so it’s time to rest on that those … … we need to … you will need other hour … … if you want to … …

Student 5

… understanding of the subject material … where below is … … there are very little … …
there are very little … colors … … to one thing … underestimate … … you should … …
confident, … and organized … … academic … physically … … I’m not sure you … …
stressful situation … … same time … … … psychology … … you need to think raceonally … … particularly ater you read the same paper with you know nothing about is very hard to do. Otherwise stress can make you panic … look at the questions calmly and raceonally and assess the questions and … … even if you haven’t prepared well enough you still need to think rationally in order to … … your best under … … don’t rely on what other students tell you about … … to start … … over the years … overestimate and underestimate … different …the reason that we need to … … to study will be different. Generally speaking for our lecture … … you will need another hour … … …

Rater 2 (Students 6 to 10)

Student 6

………who on know students  yes fair form low and ....expectation.....likewise,........many
tools and we can design......color......
…….dress in the same performed.....in any exam....and good comfortable........they except
the same out of your mind ……you recognize .it skill...we can recognize...physically, .....we
unders them....situation.......in the same town.....the mosy why..........the action control our
control effecting..........you need to ....redulars...the same bible....otherwise................how to
do.....the to patient........you will stay take .in other do........very trying can
stanceing..................we have ..........we has to automatically......... and underrating. In
different. We need to the different..................you need to .............undo ....jump........our
.if you want........

Student 7

We have on no students who have good understanding up, such prepare to
examine........fail exam. Like why no students.... we retain ....literally loan words
who one can take.....that scrape the same farm........comfortable, whitely..............my in
your ..........we care recognize.......sweeping..................
in the straight.....somehow....they seems the action..........we .consequently.......we need to
think................after you read….nothing....depend word you recognize................the
description..................into your head..you think ..do you
are...perfome..........................................................ridiculously....awful..................so
its...........you can ................follow..........................................

Student 8

we have  other students who are good at  understanding ......material......below our
expectation....none literal word …passed........ colors.....put on one thing..........
....in the same performance... really ........when our exam..comfortable.......ability....your
skill.....we recognize...to show experience....our understand....situation......can ..... the exam
time ....in this way....we can control.........physiolo........rationally..particularly.....
otherwise....panic.......even if you ........very trying.....that students tell you the
reading.....reticular........other students can study......and under.....for every hour........we're
different... Generally speaking.....we successful.........................
Student 9

we have other students who are good at understanding. up chop materia. below our 
expectation.....none literal word pass word..straight.....we can put one thing...on this.....this 
extam ...when our exam...comfortable........ability....your skill.....we recognize...to show 
experience....our understand.....mostly motive way...logical..we can control our reading....for 
the exam...after the same paper....know to to do .....rationally.....even...rationally 
enough....circumstances.......other students can study......and under.....for every 
hour.........we're different......we successful......we attain..............................thank you

Student 10

We have other students who have a good understanding of what’s up.....where below our 
expectation....none literal word pass ....straight.....we can put ....to one thing.......with the 
same......when our exam....comfortable........ability....your skin....we recognize...to show 
experience..and .... Over active mates .....mostly motive way...logical we can control our 
reading.....for an exam...after the same paper....know to do things .....rationally.....even if you 
haven’t replied to...rationally… and under....circumstances.......other students can 
study.....and under.....for every hour.........we're different......we are successful......we 
attain..............................good cakes

Rater 3 (students 11-16)
Rater 4 (Students 16 to 20)

Student 16

students to enhance letters and........... Likewise and know students that have........

thats we research...... can be ................

....as text the interesting comfortable and organized.... very wrongly......... academic ability your...... to perform under pressure.
talking about stress answer .....................enhanced ....can also be a problem.... many equally..... where you take you need to...... particularly after you read same paper .............is hard to do. ..... stress can make you panic. look at question ..........less ......even if you haven't prepared well.......... do your best........

........... what other students tell you about other time.......... Study. ...... we have had other years been very curiously..... underestimate..... time we need to.......... will be different. Generally speaking, for every hour after lectures..... you will need another hour........
Student 17

we are on a student who has a real understanding of the subject material yet. Our birth home .

We know students know ……very little. ……Our….

In December for months. With any of them, you should…… Organize. finally not only…… ability, …… your frame of mind and…….

we are appearance and swiftly hands are …under shock is when we play…….. the way you think……. For…….. particularly and …….you know nothing about is very hard to do. ….. and left….. even if you haven't

students…. in order to …. best trying……

we rely on… a located study… helping and underestimate……. reasons to locate to study ………speaking ….. attend …..miss a flower ....achieve……..

Student 18

(sorry that I cannot recognize anything)

yes where below…… as best no… understand……. you can …..are solution action even if you another

Student 19

We are hold…… understanding of the material……… form …… and ……. likewise, we know students ….and put on a light ….is colours. Hopefully…..

definition portable…… and exam …..academic ability …. Essay……

peacefully hands on slept…... with……. can also be a problem at the same time……. way to many …..writing erraticly….. send unit….
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…. Particularly…………. with you know nothing…………… otherwise……………………
…. even if you have a…….. under these…. 
…………………….. tell you about the time……… they years had been ……underrating
……………study….. …speaking ….for you unit another hour …..
if you want to …

Student 20

………………..Subject material……. perform well for presentation. ……..Don't worry ……

flying colours. Often results………… stress……

…… the importance…… assemble …sense…… comfortable and organized….. not only
takes…….. they assess your friends… and your skill to perform under stress.

………… are sweaty hands…………… stressful situation….. problem later.

psychology call it…….. particularly after… rest…… what you now noting about very hard
to do. ….. stress can make you ….. ….very trying……

don't rely on what other students tell about the time to allocate to study. The reports……

other years ridiculously……………. Time……… to allocate to study will be different

generally ……. every hour …..you attend….. follow up …..everyone achieve good grades

Rater 5 (students 21-25)
Rater 6 (students 26 - 30)

Student 26

…… we have a good understanding and successful ...........

............. passed with flying colours ................................
don’t understand us ...... academic ability .................
stress affects us ...... stress affects ...... you panic ...... even if you haven’t ...... in order to do your
best ...... to study the response ......

Student 27

a student who has lost ...................
little work ..........ability ...... to perform under ...... understand people ...... western family
...... even if............................
Student 28

We’re almost understanding ….. good understanding if subject material ……… done very little warm……………… and passed with flying colours ……… after these results can be put down to one thing, stress or a lack of it
don’t underestimate ……………………with any exam, you should feel confident ……..
comfortable and organized …… academic ability……………… assess frame of mild ……. shortness of breath …….. most effective way to ……..
stress affects the way you think ….. stress can make you panic …….. …..do your best under very stressing circumstances for every hour of lecture you need an hour of follow-up….

Student 29

Perform well below expectations …………… pass with family colours …………..
Don’t underestimate ………………… assess frame of mind ….. stressful situation ….. think rationally …….. very trying circumstances …….. everybody of lecture you …….. need an hour of follow-up…

30…………………….. Done very little work …….. can be put down to stress or lack of it. ……..
comfortable and organized ……. ………frame of mind ……. shortness of breath …….. way you think …….. think rationally …….. even if you haven’t prepared …….. don’t worry about what other students tell you ……………………… generally speaking, you need ……..

Rater 7 (Students 31 -35)

Student 31

…. Who has a …..understanding….australian….have to all intents and purposes….very little work and…colours. They are….thing. Australian or lack of guilty….don’t understand the importance or with….plays …….however, rightly or wrongly in always the economy…boyfriend and girlfriend or married…. I’m never sure…physically. I’m sure youth
or a parent...or...or shock its...in a stressful situation.....can also be a problem at the same time. The most important way to...control it .....jealous colleague ....about the way you think....after you read this paper which you know nothing about his very heart. Otherwise, trust can make you panic...... commonly and originally....even if you think you haven’t....enough you stew steak to take...under..to.....don’t reply to what others ....to study. The reports of the health....because the timid...underestimated...we are different. So.....the duration and have time...the study will be different. Generally speaking for all of the lectures you...to follow or ....you want to a ...

**Student 32**

We are now students who have a good understanding of the ...material......where below...likewise, ..now students that have......done very little work...pass with flying colours. Often the show...with any exam you should form a ....confident, comfortable and all...rightly or wrongly text ....not only... academic ability...we are recognized...physically I’m sure you have experience ...pretty..when ..in a stressful situation....can also be a problem around the same time. The most effective way to manage...physiological...is to control beating...later. Biology colleague straight...think or ...the way....reasonally particularly after you have written a seminar you know nothing about......otherwise stress can make you bend it and ...the question can be reasonal and ...the question....even if you haven’t prepared very well you still need to think reasonably and do your best under trying circumstances. Don’t rely on what other students tell you....time other students study...the results will have had over the years have been ridiculously....and the resume... we are different. So is the written one...we need...generally speaking for every hour of lectures you attend to follow-up or...if you want to achieve good grades.
Student 33

We are now students who has a look understanding by….plus why…pass with flying colours..work….precious …out to one thing… stress or lack of it. Don’t underestimate the importance….texts play ….in the same…performance….confident, comfortable and ….rightly or wrongly …not only …accept your…ability…and ….all …nice that stress….physically I’m sure apparent …and friend….or shortness…stressful situation …can be a problem at the same time…physical or logical….can train everything….psychology colleague ….you need to think pationally particularly after you risk….you know nothing about it very hard to do…otherwise, …can make you panic look at the question rationally….the question…even if you have replayed …you used to think especially in order to do your best under the very trying circumstance…..don’t rely on other students tell you about the time to study. The box we have had over the years have been really and under a resumetic…we are different. So is then the reason we need to take care of our study is also different. Seriously speaking….you understand your will and you need…after work…if you want to…

Student 34

We are now students who have a diverse understanding of the success…the same from where…we know students …for all intents and purpo ..and colours …can be booked…one thing….don’t underestimate the importance that…confident and you organize rightly or wrongly, it sounds…not only that your academic ability…you recognize that text’s on physics calleague….I’m sure you have experience and train…under ..our surface….in a certain situation… the most effective way to manage …physiology …question….which way…..the way you take all the same …basically particularly… which you don’t know nothing about is very hard to do…otherwise, ….as led fate..even if you…in order to do…don’t reply to other students…they are ok to study… the reports we had over the
years ..very over ..and under ..and we are different..study… Generally speaking for every hour…you will need another hour to follow it if you want to…good…

**Student 35**

We are now students who have a good understanding of the subject material. All the same perform well below expectation. Likewise with most students that have for all intents and purposes done very little work and pass with flying colours. From these…can be …to one thing….. don’t …on the…and the importance that ….with any same you should have been confident, comfortable and organized. Rightly or wrongly, the same in effect and not only affect the academic ability…to perform under pressure….physically..I’m sure you all experience an increased boost and the leakiness can be a problem about the same time…way to manage physiological reactions…later. Psychology causes stress like the way you think for…the same you need to think rationally particularly up to …the same paper…otherwise stress can make you panic…question carefully and rationally and stress location unless….if you haven’t prepared well enough. you have to live to think rationally in order to do ….under…. don’t rely on what other students tell you they all ok to study. All the reports we have read over the years ridiculously. All the resume and over the resumetic we are different so things go recent that the time we need to …study will be different. For every hour of lectures you attend you will need another hour of follow-up or research work if you want to achieve good grades.

**Rater 8 (Students 36-40)**

Country of Birth: The Netherlands

**Student 36**
We are new student that have a good understanding of the subject material … the same or below expectation like the …..student that the have …..the little work and pass with flying colours often this reasons can be put down to one thing stress or lack of it. don’t underestimate the importance ……..feeling comfortable confident or it is in effect…..no only……. ability….. assess your frame of mind your skill to perform under pressure. we recognised the stress…….. we are sure you are experienced …..or straight situation. ….. can also be a ……. time the most effective way to monitor these……. is ……..psychologically ……..effect the way you think for this reason …rationally particularly up to ………your know nothing …about your very hard….. otherwise stress can make you balanced……….. calmly rationally and beside the question……. even if you haven’t very …..you still need to think rationally particularly…….. your under the very trying….. all the students tell you about the time they had to study .the past we have …the years have been really overestimated and underestimated. we are all different so this…. we need to all study will be different for every hour….. you attend ……..another hour of follow up if you want to acquire good grace.

**Student 37**

We are Vietnam student who has good understanding of the material… while you have students…… and the purposes ..and …the.. work…… flying colours…… stress …should ……confident comfortable …..and…will effect ability…. mind… under restore ….recognise the ….stress…. up so you….. placed in the situation…. same time…… to manage this is all…. think ….for understand you need t think… after …. same paper very hard to… otherwise …stress… the rest and to set English is to have you…..stew… back under the other students tell you about the time the report has other critically
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….overestimated a different so this that the time allocate are different you … leak…… all the you want to….

**Student 38**

We have now student who have good understanding of material, likewise we have no student that have …..for purposes,…. done very little… and pass with flying color …and can put to one think…. stress or lack of it don’t understand the importance the …..you should put….. confident comfortable and organised one thing is wrong the same in effect no t only take the…. Ability…. to asses the form… under pressure we are recognise desperate physically… I’m sure you have experience and frequent and are a break …when…. stressful situation…… the most effective way to manage… these reactions is through control. We….. later…. straight effect the way you think… for this you need to think rationally particularly… you read on the paper… you know nothing about ..very had to do otherwise stress can make you panic, look at the… rationally reasonably and the effect you have repair well enough you will still need to think rationally in order to ….very trying…… don’t rely on what other student tell you they ways to study you have had over the years have been ridiculously and we are different so it stands to reason the the way to study will be different severally speaking for every hour you will need another follow up if you want to achieve good grease.

**Student 39**

We are student that has a good understanding of…….. same as….. expectation that’s why we are student……. very little work… and…. messy colors …..for this reason can be ….stress… and in stress this…. in any…. fairly comfortable and organized…. no only test
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ability…. says your friend and your skill…. we are ….stress….. physically …..experience… we… has situation. listening can also be…. same time…. many these….. this time… clearer. Stress… the ways you think are not the same you need to think…. particularly …you…… you know nothing about very hard to…. otherwise stress can…… even if you have under ….enough you still think in another 2 years trying….. change… realise what other students tell you the time. study over the years has been very mating underestimating …these are different these… study with difference …speaking area you will need another hour for research

**Student 40**

……Student who has good understanding…. were we ere no student… very least.. first result can be ….. like…. underestimate the importance… with any confident comfortable…. as same….. your and your skills….. we are defiantly…. Sure.. you… stressful situation….. can also be… at same time.. way to…. Psychological … can …the way is using.. you need to think personally…… very hard to do either way… can make you panic….personally… even if you…. you still need to think rationally… under the trying…. what others tell you about the time they study… we have over the year overestimate & underestimate…Listen at the time….. generally speaking area you will miss another hour or research this way.

**Rater 9**

*Regarding the first speaker as I understand it*

We are students ..supply. materials …understand the importance of the trip ….confident …text …..your ability ..and skew …... under special circumstances .....prepare a paper with you ready noting …overestimate and underestimate …we are different …..

Second speaker
We are student who has god understanding …..expectations ..in terms .. propose..don’t understand ..building confident capable ..stress can effect your academic ability …can answer the problem .. the most effective way to manage that physically …control ….stress can affect the way you think .you need to think rationally particularly ..very hard to do otherwise stress can make you panic …locate the…calmly rationally  and face this in order to… don’t relay on what others said about the time…study …recklessly ..overestimate ,underestimate we are in different so we need to locate ….  

*Third speaker*

We are student who has a good understanding of the subject …below expectations ..we’ve known student…. done very little work ..on the result can put our… think … don’t underestimate the importance…. with any exam you should feel confident  comfortable and organize(d) ..rightly wrongly.. stress can effect not only test your academic ability ..your skills performance…. we recognize that stress affect us physically …..place on stressful situation….. can possibly a problem …the most effective way to manage that …seek for logical reactions …psychological ..stress affect the way … you need to think rationally particularly after … you need an exam with not nothing about it it is very hard to do s otherwise stress can make you panic ….look to the question calmly and rationally  and let face it … you need to think rationally in order to do understand circumstances… don’t relay on other student about the time they locate those study recklessly… overestimate ..underestimate …so we are in different understanding so the time we need to allocate to study will be different ..generally speaking for every hour we attend lecture …

*Fourth speaker*

We are student who has a good understanding of the subject… where belo ur expectation …that why we known student … proposed stress …don’t underestimate ..importance .. confident comfortable ..uprising ..damage ability ..performance under pressure ..we recognize .. stress affect our physically ….appearance…. situation …problem…. the most effective way to manage it … you need to think rationally , particularly … stress can make you panic … even if you not prepare well enough … don’t relay on what other said … we are different we need time or locate .

Fifth speaker: (sorry I can’t hear: putting stress on words, wrong pauses, monotonous)

We are student who…………………………purpose……situation….don’t …confident….
APPENDIX 9: RATER 10’ COMMENTS ON STUDENTS 46-50:

If you can, please give some comments on the five speakers in general and each speaker in particular:

Comments:

Same rhythm – monotone

Separation of poly-syllabic words: phy-si-lo-gi-cal, ri-di-cu-lous-ly

No stress on words

Very flat tone

In some cases, no pause between sentences

I can recognize and guess some words because of being a teacher of English. (Skill, attend, stress, likewise, panic, exam …)

Comments on specific student
Student 46:
flat – monotone
no clear pronunciation
no stress on words
no plural
Student 47: quick, flat, skip some words
Student 48: very flat, not clear and poor pronunciation
Student 49: no intonation – the same rhythm
Student 50 clearer pronunciation, less monotone. Separation of poly-syllabic words

Thank you for your responses

APPENDIX 10: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
21-Jan-2011

Dear Dr Dobrenov-Major

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: AN INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE MOTHER TONGUE ON VIETNAMESE ADULT EFL LEARNERS’ SPEECH INTELLIGIBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO SUPRASEGMENTALS" (GU Ref No: EBL/74/10/HREC).

The additional information was considered by Office for Research.

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards
Karen Moorehead
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