

FACTORS SHAPING PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL AT VIETNAM YOUTH ACADEMY: INSIGHTS FROM LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the factors that shape speaking skill among Public Relations undergraduates at Vietnam Youth Academy. A survey was conducted with 150 students, covering six areas: motivation, personality, linguistic competence, practice opportunities, class size, and teaching methods. The scales were checked through Cronbach's Alpha and an exploratory factor analysis to make sure they worked reasonably well in this context. From the students' responses, motivation appears to be driven mainly by future career needs and everyday communication. At the same time, several practical obstacles keep emerging. Many students struggle with vocabulary and grammar, and they report having relatively few chances to practise speaking in real situations. Personality also plays a part, as shyness and low confidence tend to hold some students back. Teaching practices and class size were rated as helpful to a certain extent, although students did not see them as decisive. The gender comparison did not show any meaningful differences across the six domains. The findings point to a few areas that deserve more attention: helping students build a stronger linguistic base, creating more authentic speaking tasks with useful feedback, and fostering classroom environments that support confidence and reduce anxiety.

KEY WORDS: speaking skill; shaping factors; Public Relations students; learners' perspectives; Vietnam Youth Academy.

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1. Introduction

English speaking is an essential skill for university students, especially for those preparing to work in communication-oriented fields such as Public Relations (PR). In practice, PR professionals need not only strong writing ability but also the confidence to communicate ideas clearly in English in meetings, interviews, or public presentations. For PR students at Vietnam Youth Academy, however, speaking English often remains demanding. It requires more than knowing grammar and vocabulary; it also depends on confidence, regular practice, and the supportiveness of the learning environment.

At Vietnam Youth Academy, English modules play a significant part in the PR curriculum. They aim to develop communicative competence that supports both academic work and professional purposes in future. Yet many PR students still struggle to express themselves with ease. Their difficulties have raised questions about which factors most strongly influence their performance, particularly in speaking skill. Understanding these influences is important for improving teaching practices and supporting better learning outcomes.

Previous research in EFL has shown that learners' speaking ability is affected by both internal and external factors. Surprisingly, although these issues have been widely discussed in broader EFL contexts, very little work has examined PR students in Vietnam, even though speaking is central to their future profession.

This study attempts to address that gap by examining the main factors that seem to shape PR students' speaking performance at the Vietnam Youth Academy. Through a quantitative survey, the research investigates six dimensions: motivation, personality, linguistic competence, practice

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opportunities, class size, and teaching methods. The results focus on offering practical insights for teachers and curriculum developers who work with PR learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking skill

Luoma (2004) noted that speaking performance reflects not only a learner's linguistic competence but also their ability to use language appropriately in real communicative situations. Housen and Kuiken (2009) described speaking through the lenses of accuracy, fluency, and complexity, pointing out that these dimensions tend to be particularly demanding for EFL learners. These perspectives show that speaking in a foreign language is best understood as a multidimensional construct.

2.2. Factors Shaping Speaking Skill

2.2.1. Personal Factors

Motivation: Dörnyei (2005) pointed out that motivation plays a central role in shaping learners' willingness to use the language, and he tied this directly to both academic progress and meaningful communicative engagement. Later, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) expanded this line of thought through the L2 Motivational Self System. They argued that the ability to imagine an Ideal L2 Self—for example, being able to speak with confidence or meeting future professional expectations—can serve as a strong and lasting motivational force, especially for developing speaking competence.

Personality: Research has long shown that individual differences play an important part in shaping learners' speaking ability. Horwitz (1986) noted that anxiety, shyness, and fear of negative evaluation can strongly discourage students from taking part in classroom speaking activities. Teimouri (2017) adapted the grit construct to L2 learning and found that it helps learners persist even when they face setbacks. Such persistence seems particularly useful when students struggle with speaking tasks and are trying to strengthen their communicative competence.

Linguistic Competence: Chomsky's (1965) distinction between competence and performance laid an early foundation for later discussions of speaking, as many scholars have noted that grammar and vocabulary account for only part of what contributes to oral proficiency. In pronunciation research, Derwing and Munro (1997) showed that listeners tend to rely more on overall comprehensibility—often shaped by clear articulation—than on perfectly native-like accuracy. From a communicative perspective, Bygate (2001) drew attention to the role of discourse organisation in developing fluency. In ESP contexts, domain-specific knowledge has also been found to support clearer and more confident spoken communication (Basturkmen, 2010).

2.2.2. Learning Environment Factors

Practice opportunities: Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis underscored the value of giving learners opportunities to produce language, noting that speaking tasks can help them notice gaps in their knowledge and gradually refine their oral proficiency. From a pedagogical standpoint, Bygate (2001) likewise highlighted the contribution of communicative, task-based activities in building both fluency and accuracy. Teacher support also plays a meaningful role. Williams and Burden (1997) observed that encouraging teacher–student relationships can strengthen learners' confidence to participate in oral work. Later empirical research adds weight to this view, showing that supportive classroom dynamics increase students' willingness to communicate and, in turn, create more space for speaking practice (Zarrinabadi, 2014).

Class Size: Large language classes often reduce the amount of time each learner can spend speaking, which in turn makes it difficult for oral fluency to develop. Nunan (1991) pointed out that when classes become too large, teachers struggle to provide balanced opportunities for participation. Hayes (1997) found that limited teacher–student interaction in such settings often leaves many learners with very little time to speak at all.

Teaching Methods: Richards and Rodgers (2001) noted that using a range of instructional practices—such as presentations, role-plays, and small-group discussions—can widen opportunities

for students to engage in spoken interaction. Classroom research by Harmer (2007) showed that constructive feedback and flexible lesson organisation tend to support stronger spoken performance by giving learners clearer guidance and more space to participate.

3. Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine the factors that influence the English-speaking skills of Public Relations undergraduates at Vietnam Youth Academy. The cross-sectional approach made it possible to collect students' perceptions at a single point in time and to explore relationships among the different study variables. The six focal factors—motivation, personality, linguistic competence, practice opportunities, class size, and teaching methods—were identified from established theories in second language acquisition and educational psychology. This design was suitable for describing trends and testing associations among variables within one academic context.

Participants: The participants were PR students enrolled in the 2024–2025 academic year who had completed a B1-level English course. Using simple random sampling, 150 students voluntarily participated in the survey, consisting of 71 males (47.3%) and 79 females (52.7%). Most of them (94%) had studied English for seven years or more, while a small group (6%) had less experience. In terms of language exposure, 5.3% reported rare English use, 36.7% occasional use, 46.7% frequent use, and 11.3% constant use. This range of experience helped ensure that subgroup comparisons would remain meaningful in later analysis.

Instruments: The study used a structured questionnaire adapted from reliable instruments and modified to suit the PR learning context. The survey included 28 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items were organized into six categories: motivation (4 items), personality (5), linguistic competence (5), practice opportunities (5), class size (4), and teaching methods (5). In addition to these, several demographic questions—such as gender, years of English study, and frequency of language use—were included to support subgroup comparisons. Before the main survey, a pilot test with 30 students was conducted to check clarity, reliability, and timing, leading to minor wording adjustments.

Data Collection Procedures: Questionnaires were distributed in paper form during class sessions to obtain a high response rate and to ensure clarity in instructions. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all students. They were informed about the study's aims, and anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed since no personal identifying information was collected. The completed questionnaires were then coded for analysis.

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The process involved four main stages. The dataset was screened for missing values, outliers, and coding errors, and no serious issues were found. Reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable to high internal consistency across scales, with coefficients ranging from .738 to .915. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation confirmed construct validity. The KMO value (.829) and Bartlett's Test ($\chi^2 = 2616.712$, $df = 378$, $p < .001$) verified the adequacy of the data. Six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, explaining 68.53% of the total variance. Factor loadings ranged from .487 to .903, exceeding the recommended minimum of .50. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to interpret the data. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each factor, and independent-samples t-tests were run to examine gender differences, using a significance level of $p < .05$.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Measurement Scale Validation

- Reliability Analysis of the Scales (Cronbach's Alpha):

The reliability analysis showed that all measurement scales reached acceptable to high levels of internal consistency, suggesting that the constructs were measured in a fairly stable way. The motivation scale ($\alpha = .738$) met the threshold for adequate reliability, while personality, linguistic competence, practice opportunities, and class size achieved stronger coefficients ($\alpha = .816-.877$). Teaching methods recorded the highest value ($\alpha = .915$), indicating that students responded to these items with a particularly high degree of coherence. This strong agreement may reflect how clearly PR students perceive instructional practices within their learning environment. The scales performed reliably and were suitable for further factor analysis.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha for Each Factor

Factor	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Motivation	4	0.738	Adequate reliability
Personality	5	0.816	Strong reliability
Linguistic Competence	5	0.869	Strong reliability
Practice Opportunities	5	0.822	Strong reliability
Class Size	4	0.877	Strong reliability
Teaching Methods	5	0.915	High reliability

- KMO và Bartlett's Test:

The dataset was examined with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to ensure that the correlations among items were adequate for factor extraction. The KMO value reached .829, which indicates solid sampling adequacy and a strong degree of shared variance across items. Bartlett's Test was significant ($\chi^2 = 2616.712$, $df = 378$, $p < .001$). The correlation matrix met the assumptions required for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). From the statistical outcomes, it is verified that the data possessed sufficient coherence for identifying underlying factor structures.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.829
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2616.712
	df	378
	Sig.	.000

-Total Variance Explained by Extracted Factors:

Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 68.53% of the total variance. Factor 1 contributed 30.41%, followed by Factor 2 with 14.13%, Factor 3 with 8.44%, Factor 4 with 6.94%, Factor 5 with 4.75%, and Factor 6 with 3.86%. The proportion of explained variance indicates a stable and interpretable factor structure. The items captured the essential dimensions of students' perceptions without excessive overlap among constructs.

Table 3. Total Explained Variance Explained by Extracted Factors

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.515	30.410	30.410	8.515	30.410	30.410	5.183	18.511	18.511
2	3.957	14.131	44.541	3.957	14.131	44.541	3.812	13.615	32.127
3	2.362	8.435	52.976	2.362	8.435	52.976	3.803	13.581	45.708
4	1.944	6.942	59.918	1.944	6.942	59.918	2.688	9.601	55.309
5	1.330	4.749	64.667	1.330	4.749	64.667	1.861	6.647	61.956
6	1.081	3.862	68.530	1.081	3.862	68.530	1.841	6.573	68.530

- Rotated Component Matrix:

To examine the construct validity of the measurement instrument, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. Six factors were extracted from the 28 items, with loadings falling between .487 and .903. All values were above the commonly suggested .50 cutoff (Hair et al., 2010). The loading pattern shows that the items grouped together in a way that aligns well with their intended constructs. This results in a clear and interpretable factor structure.

The extracted factors represented motivation (4 items, .876–.903), personality (5 items, .487–.751), linguistic competence (5 items, .595–.764), practice opportunities (5 items, .508–.753), class size (4 items, .729–.791), and teaching methods (5 items, .699–.884). Because the clusters appear distinct and orderly, it seems that students responded with reference to several connected aspects of their learning experience. This arrangement offers further support for construct validity and captures the layered nature of PR students' views on learning English.

Table 4. Factor Loadings for Extracted Factors

Factor	Number of Items	Factor Loading Range
Motivation	4	.876 – .903
Personality	5	.487 – .751
Linguistic Competence	5	.595 – .764
Practice Opportunities	5	.508 – .753
Class Size	4	.729 – .791
Teaching Methods	5	.699 – .884

4.2. Participant Information*-. Gender Distribution:*

The study involved 150 PR students from the Vietnam Youth Academy, including 71 males (47.3%) and 79 females (52.7%). Although there were slightly more female participants, the gender balance was fairly even. This made the sample representative and reliable for comparison. The balanced distribution allowed for a look at possible differences between male and female students in their English learning attitudes. The narrow difference between the groups aligns with what is

typically observed in Vietnam's communication and language fields, which tend to attract slightly more female students.

Table 5. Gender Distribution
Gender Distribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	71	47.3	47.3	47.3
	Female	79	52.7	52.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

- Duration of English Learning:

As shown in Table 6, most respondents (94.0%) had been learning English for seven years or longer. Only a small group (6.0%) had studied it for a shorter period. The finding clearly reflects that English learning is not new to the participants and that they already have considerable experience with the language. The correspondents started learning English early in their school years and continue through university. The limited number of short-term learners may slightly affect individual differences, but the overall sample still represents a group with steady and long-term learning backgrounds.

Table 6. Duration of English Learning
Duration of English Learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	7 years or more	141	94.0	94.0	94.0
	Less than 7 years	9	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

- Frequency of Exposure to English:

Table 7 presents how often students used English in their daily or academic life. Only a few respondents (5.3%) said they used English rarely, while about one third (36.7%) used it only occasionally. Nearly half of the group (46.7%) reported frequent use, and a smaller group (11.3%) said they always used English. These figures show that more than half of the students were regularly exposed to the language, which suggests a fairly active level of engagement with English. However, the considerable proportion of occasional users indicates uneven learning opportunities, as not all students had the same chances to practice or apply English outside the classroom.

Table 7. Frequency of Exposure to English
Frequency of Exposure to English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rarely	8	5.3	5.3	5.3
	Occasionally	55	36.7	36.7	42.0
	Frequently	70	46.7	46.7	88.7
	Always	17	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

- Ranking the importance of language skills:

According to Table 8, students gave the highest importance to speaking ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .780$), followed by listening ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .785$). Reading ranked third ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .718$), and writing received the lowest score ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .807$). It can be seen that the students placed greater value on oral communication than on written skills. This pattern is quite understandable, as PR students often focus on interactive and practical communication, which plays a central role in their academic and future professional work. The relatively low ranking of writing also suggests that it is seen as less immediately useful, even though it remains an important skill in professional communication.

Table 8. *Ranking the importance of language skills*
Ranking the importance of language skills

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ranking the Importance of Listening Skill	150	1	4	1.88	.785
Ranking the Importance of Speaking Skill	150	1	4	1.57	.780
Ranking the Importance of Reading Skill	150	1	4	3.03	.718
Ranking the Importance of Writing Skill	150	1	4	3.56	.807
Valid N (listwise)	150				

4.3. Factors shaping speaking skill

4.3.1. Personal factors

- Motivation:

As shown in Table 9, students were mainly motivated by career-related goals when learning English. The highest mean score was reported for the item “to meet the needs of future professional work” ($M = 4.41$, $SD = .813$), followed by the wish “to communicate with others in English” ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .915$). These responses reveal that students placed strong emphasis on practical and communicative purposes, which are closely linked to the nature of Public Relations studies. In contrast, motives related to academic success ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .976$) and test achievement ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.011$) were rated lower, showing that exam scores were not the main driving force behind their English learning.

Table 9. *Motivation*
Motivation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I practice speaking to get better results in my English modules at university.	150	1	5	3.88	.976
I practice English speaking to get high scores in tests like IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC.	150	1	5	3.84	1.011
I want to improve my English speaking skills to meet the needs of my future professional work.	150	1	5	4.41	.813

I want to improve my speaking skills to communicate with others in English.	150	1	5	4.26	.915
Valid N (listwise)	150				

- Personality:

Table 10 presents the results for personality-related items. The mean scores were generally low, showing that students were less confident and outgoing when speaking English. The highest score was for enjoying new opportunities to communicate ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.077$), which suggests a moderate level of enthusiasm toward practicing speaking. However, lower scores for feeling confident when speaking to large groups ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.008$) and not feeling shy or embarrassed ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.000$) indicate continuing difficulties with anxiety and self-consciousness. Other items, such as being open in class ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.006$) and persistence when facing problems ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.009$), also stayed around the middle level. It is obvious that many students are still hesitant in public speaking situations and may need more supportive classroom activities to build confidence.

Table 10. Personality
Personality

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am often open and active in English speaking activities in class.	150	1	5	2.85	1.006
I feel comfortable and confident when I speak English in front of many people.	150	1	5	2.51	1.008
I don't feel shy or embarrassed when I speak English in front of many people.	150	1	5	2.55	1.000
I keep practicing speaking English even when I have difficulties.	150	1	5	2.73	1.009
I like experiencing new communication situations to improve my speaking skill.	150	1	5	3.05	1.077
Valid N (listwise)	150				

- Linguistic Competence:

Table 11 shows that students rated their linguistic competence in English speaking at a rather low level. The highest mean score appeared for accurate pronunciation ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.044$), suggesting that some students felt reasonably confident in being understood. However, the results for vocabulary ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .883$) and grammar ($M = 2.43$, $SD = .979$) were weaker, indicating that limited language range still affected their performance. The lowest ratings were for organizing ideas ($M = 2.22$, $SD = .982$) and topic knowledge ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .958$), pointing to difficulty expressing thoughts clearly and fluently. Clearly, problems with vocabulary, grammar, and idea organization remain main barriers to improving students' speaking ability.

Table 11. Linguistic Competence
Linguistic Competence

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have a wide enough English vocabulary to express my ideas clearly in speaking activities.	150	1	5	2.35	.883
I have a good knowledge of grammar and can use it when speaking English.	150	1	5	2.43	.979
I pronounce English accurately, and people can easily understand what I say.	150	1	5	2.58	1.044
I do not have difficulties in forming and organizing ideas clearly and logically when speaking English.	150	1	5	2.22	.982
I do not face speaking problems caused by a lack of topic knowledge.	150	1	5	2.19	.958
Valid N (listwise)	150				

4.3.2. Learning Environment Factors

- Practice Opportunities:

As presented in Table 12, students reported limited opportunities to practice English speaking. The highest mean score was for classroom participation through speaking and asking questions ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.060$), which shows that lessons offered some regular chances for oral use of English. In contrast, opportunities linked to interactive learning activities such as discussions and presentations ($M = 2.38$, $SD = .895$) or using English in academic and professional tasks ($M = 2.39$, $SD = .954$) were much lower. The lowest means were recorded for speaking outside class ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.015$) and for practice with native or proficient speakers ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.059$). It is clear from the figures that students' English use remains mainly classroom-based, with few authentic situations to apply speaking skills beyond formal lessons.

Table 12. Practice Opportunities
Practice opportunities

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I frequently have opportunities to participate in learning activities (such as discussions, presentations, and group work) to improve my speaking skills.	150	1	5	2.38	.895
I often get opportunities to speak English outside class, like in clubs and school activities.	150	1	5	2.30	1.015
I often have opportunities to practice my English speaking skills with native speakers or proficient users of English.	150	1	5	2.29	1.059

I am encouraged to participate by speaking and asking questions in English during lessons.	150	1	5	2.81	1.060
I have many opportunities to practice speaking English in academic or professional activities related to my major.	150	1	5	2.39	.954
Valid N (listwise)	150				

- Class Size:

As seen in Table 13, students viewed class size as an important element influencing their English speaking practice. The highest mean score was for the statement that smaller classes help improve speaking skills faster ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.101$). This was followed by the ideas that small groups allow more teacher attention and support ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.069$) and that they enhance students' confidence ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.085$). The lowest mean score was recorded for having greater opportunities to speak in smaller classes ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.044$). It appears from the data that students value the supportive atmosphere of small classes, but do not always feel that class size directly provides many additional chances for speaking practice.

Table 13. *Class Size*
Class Size

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I gain greater opportunities to speak and practice English in classes with fewer students.	150	1	5	2.77	1.044
In smaller classes, I feel at ease and more confident.	150	1	5	3.07	1.085
I receive more attention and support from my teacher for speaking skill because the class size is small.	150	1	5	3.11	1.069
A reduced class size accelerates the improvement of my speaking competence.	150	1	5	3.43	1.101
Valid N (listwise)	150				

- Teaching Methods:

As shown in Table 14, students regarded teaching methods as an important element influencing their English-speaking progress. The highest mean score was recorded for teachers' encouragement to join speaking activities ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .932$), implying that active involvement was highly valued. The next item concerned the use of varied techniques such as discussions, presentations, and role-plays ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .980$), which many students found effective for improving oral communication. Slightly lower means appeared for receiving timely feedback ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.018$) and having classroom opportunities to practice ($M = 3.15$, $SD = .981$). The lowest rating referred to increased motivation and confidence through teaching methods ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .967$). This pattern highlights that while teachers' encouragement and instructional variety play a strong role in shaping speaking development, students may still require additional motivational support to gain confidence in using English.

Table 14. Teaching Methods
Teaching Methods

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The teacher always encourages students to actively participate in English speaking activities.	150	1	5	3.53	.932
The teacher uses a variety of teaching methods (such as group discussions, presentations, and role-plays) to develop students' English speaking skills.	150	1	5	3.45	.980
I have many opportunities to practice speaking due to the teacher's various ways of organizing the class.	150	1	5	3.15	.981
I receive helpful and prompt feedback from my teacher to improve my speaking ability.	150	1	5	3.25	1.018
The teacher's teaching methods make me feel more motivated and confident in practicing English speaking.	150	1	5	3.13	.967
Valid N (listwise)	150				

4.3.3. Comparison of factor group influences

Table 15 summarizes the average scores across the six main factors influencing students' English-speaking ability. The highest mean belonged to motivation ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.70$), indicating that most students were strongly driven to improve their speaking. Linguistic competence recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 0.79$), reflecting continuing problems with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Regarding classroom and environmental aspects, both teaching methods ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.84$) and class size ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.92$) were at a moderate level, meaning that students recognized some pedagogical support, though not consistently strong. Practice opportunities ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.76$) were rated relatively low. This indicates limited chances to use English beyond class. Personality ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.77$) also fell below the midpoint, which implies that confidence and willingness to speak remain problematic for many learners.

The data reveal a clear imbalance: while students possess high motivation, their linguistic limitations, restricted practice exposure, and low self-confidence still constrain their actual performance in speaking activities.

Table 15. Influence Levels of Factor Groups
Influence Levels of Factor Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	150	1.00	5.00	4.0983	.69689
Personality	150	1.00	5.00	2.7387	.77475
LinguisticCompetence	150	1.00	5.00	2.3547	.78685
PracticeOpportunity	150	1.00	4.40	2.4333	.76340
ClassSize	150	1.00	5.00	3.0933	.91847

TeachingMethod	150	1.00	5.00	3.3053	.84367
Valid N (listwise)	150				

4.3.4. Comparison of factor impacts between Male and Female Students

In Table 16, the mean scores for male ($n = 71$) and female ($n = 79$) participants are compared across the six measured factors. With the two means falling so close together, gender does not seem to contribute meaningfully to differences in speaking ability. Female students obtained slightly higher means in motivation ($M = 4.13$ vs. 4.06), practice opportunities ($M = 2.44$ vs. 2.43), class size ($M = 3.19$ vs. 2.99), and teaching methods ($M = 3.34$ vs. 3.27). Male students reported marginally higher scores in personality ($M = 2.78$ vs. 2.70) and linguistic competence ($M = 2.44$ vs. 2.28). The SD values, lying between 0.69 and 0.99 for both groups, reflect a consistent pattern of variability across male and female students. Gender differences appear minimal and statistically insignificant, reflecting only small tendencies rather than meaningful contrasts.

Table 16. Influence Levels of Factor Groups between Male and Female Students

Influence Levels of Factor Groups between Male and Female Students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation	Male	71	4.0634	.71179	.08447
	Female	79	4.1297	.68624	.07721
Personality	Male	71	2.7831	.77809	.09234
	Female	79	2.6987	.77451	.08714
Linguistic Competence	Male	71	2.4394	.83469	.09906
	Female	79	2.2785	.73827	.08306
Practice Opportunities	Male	71	2.4254	.77528	.09201
	Female	79	2.4405	.75744	.08522
Class Size	Male	71	2.9859	.82796	.09826
	Female	79	3.1899	.98808	.11117
Teaching Methods	Male	71	3.2704	.89321	.10600
	Female	79	3.3367	.80099	.09012

Levene's test reported p-values between .277 and .948, confirming that the two gender groups had similar variances. The independent-samples t-test therefore applied without adjustment. None of the six factors produced a significant difference between male and female students: motivation ($t(148) = -0.58$, $p = .562$), personality ($t(148) = 0.67$, $p = .507$), linguistic competence ($t(148) = 1.25$, $p = .212$), practice opportunities ($t(148) = -0.12$, $p = .904$), class size ($t(148) = -1.36$, $p = .175$), and teaching methods ($t(148) = -0.48$, $p = .632$). Confidence intervals for all mean differences crossed zero, which means that the small gaps in scores are statistically uncertain.

With the results viewed in context, gender seems to play little role in shaping how students perceive the factors that support or limit their English-speaking ability. Although female students reported slightly higher scores in motivation, class size, and teaching methods, the margins were very small and fall within what might be expected by random variation. In short, gender does not appear to influence students' judgments in any consistent way.

Table 17. Independent Samples t-test Results
Independent Samples t-test Results

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.097	.756	-.581	148	.562	-.06637	.11422	-.29207	.15934
	Equal variances not assumed			-.580	144.995	.563	-.06637	.11444	-.29256	.15982
Personality	Equal variances assumed	.040	.842	.665	148	.507	.08436	.12693	-.16647	.33520
	Equal variances not assumed			.664	146.162	.507	.08436	.12697	-.16656	.33529
Linguistic Competence	Equal variances assumed	.971	.326	1.253	148	.212	.16096	.12843	-.09284	.41475
	Equal variances not assumed			1.245	140.642	.215	.16096	.12928	-.09462	.41653
Practice Opportunities	Equal variances assumed	.004	.948	-.121	148	.904	-.01515	.12525	-.26267	.23236
	Equal variances not assumed			-.121	145.512	.904	-.01515	.12541	-.26302	.23271
Class Size	Equal variances assumed	1.192	.277	-1.362	148	.175	-.20396	.14977	-.49992	.09201
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.375	147.302	.171	-.20396	.14837	-.49717	.08925
Teaching Methods	Equal variances assumed	1.073	.302	-.479	148	.632	-.06629	.13833	-.33963	.20706
	Equal variances not assumed			-.476	141.443	.635	-.06629	.13913	-.34134	.20876

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the main personal and environmental factors that influence the English-speaking ability of Public Relations students and to understand how these factors interact within their everyday learning context at Vietnam Youth Academy. By looking at motivation, personality, linguistic competence, class size, practice opportunities, and teaching methods, the research offers a clearer picture of the conditions that shape students' progress in speaking.

The findings highlight several consistent tendencies among PR students at Vietnam Youth Academy. Although female students form a larger proportion of the cohort, gender itself does not lead to meaningful differences in how students view the factors affecting their speaking development. Most learners have studied English for many years, which gives them a strong foundation for university-level courses. However, their actual exposure to English varies sharply. Only a part of the group uses English frequently in daily life, while many others engage with it only occasionally,

which limits their speaking improvement. Even so, students are fully aware that speaking and listening are essential for their future PR careers. Their strongest motivation comes from the need to communicate effectively in professional settings, while exam-related goals play a supporting role. Confidence remains a challenge for many students, as they often feel shy, hesitant, or easily discouraged in speaking situations. Their linguistic resources also need strengthening, especially vocabulary range, grammar use, pronunciation, and idea organisation. Opportunities to practise speaking outside the classroom are still limited, and large class sizes reduce the time each student can actively participate. Despite these challenges, students appreciate the teaching methods used by their instructors and recognise the effort teachers make to support their speaking development.

These results suggest several implications for teaching practice. PR students at Vietnam Youth Academy would benefit from more regular and meaningful speaking tasks connected to real PR activities, such as discussions, presentations, simulations of workplace communication, and project-based teamwork. A supportive classroom atmosphere that reduces anxiety and encourages risk-taking can help students who lack confidence. More topic-based input, stronger vocabulary development, and guided speaking frames may also make it easier for students to express their ideas more clearly. While reducing class size may not always be possible, instructors can increase practice opportunities through pair work, rotating groups, short speaking tasks, and blended-learning tools.

The sample represents only one cohort at Vietnam Youth Academy, so the findings cannot be generalised to all PR students. In addition, the use of self-reported data may not fully reflect students' actual performance. Future research could include performance-based speaking assessments, classroom observations, or longitudinal studies to follow students' development across different stages of their programme.

In sum, the study shows that PR students at Vietnam Youth Academy possess strong motivation and a clear understanding of why speaking matters for their future profession, yet they still require richer exposure, stronger linguistic support, and more confidence-building opportunities to grow into capable and communicative young PR practitioners.

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**Những yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến kỹ năng nói của sinh viên ngành Quan hệ công chúng
tại Học viện Thanh thiếu niên Việt Nam: Góc nhìn từ phía người học**

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này xem xét những yếu tố tác động đến kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên ngành Quan hệ công chúng (PR) tại Học viện Thanh thiếu niên Việt Nam. Khảo sát được thực hiện với 150 sinh viên, tập trung vào sáu khía cạnh: động lực, tính cách, năng lực ngôn ngữ, cơ hội thực hành, quy mô lớp học và phương pháp giảng dạy. Các thang đo đã được kiểm tra bằng hệ số Cronbach's Alpha và phân tích nhân tố khám phá nhằm đảm bảo độ tin cậy thang đo và kiểm tra giá trị cấu trúc của các yếu tố đo lường. Từ phản hồi của sinh viên, động lực học nói chủ yếu xuất phát từ nhu cầu nghề nghiệp trong tương lai và giao tiếp hằng ngày. Song song với đó, một số khó khăn mang tính thực tế vẫn thường xuyên được ghi nhận. Nhiều sinh viên gặp khó khăn về vốn từ vựng và ngữ pháp, và cho biết họ có khá ít cơ hội luyện nói trong những tình huống thực tế. Tính cách cũng góp phần ảnh hưởng, vì sự rụt rè và thiếu tự tin thường khiến một số sinh viên hạn chế tham gia hoạt động nói. Các phương pháp giảng dạy và quy mô lớp học được đánh giá là có ích ở một mức độ nhất định, mặc dù sinh viên không xem đây là yếu tố mang tính quyết định. So sánh theo giới cho thấy không có sự khác biệt đáng kể nào giữa nam và nữ trên cả sáu yếu tố. Các phát hiện gợi ý một số điểm cần được chú ý hơn: củng cố nền tảng ngôn ngữ cho sinh viên, tạo ra nhiều hoạt động nói mang tính thực tế hơn kèm theo phản hồi hữu ích, và xây dựng môi trường học tập hỗ trợ sự tự tin cũng như giảm bớt lo âu đối với người học.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng nói; yếu tố tác động; sinh viên ngành Quan hệ công chúng; góc nhìn sinh viên; Học viện Thanh thiếu niên Việt Nam.