Exploring Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on English Speaking Performance of Third-Year EFL Students at a University in Vietnam

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Abstract- **This study explores how third-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at The University of Danang – University of Foreign Language Studies (UD-UFLS) perceive the impact of negative transfer from Vietnamese on their English speaking performance. It then identifies common errors and underlying factors, proposing strategies to mitigate this transfer. Using error analysis (EA) alongside quantitative and qualitative methods, 104 third-year EFL students participated, with data collected through oral corpora, questionnaires, and interviews. The study found that discoursal errors were most common (225), followed by lexical (59) and syntactic errors (67). Seven primary error categories were identified, with cohesion (169) being predominant. While most students recognized the adverse effects of negative transfer, few could distinguish between types. Factors contributing to this transfer included reliance on Vietnamese during speaking. Despite prolonged exposure to English, third-year EFL students struggled to overcome Vietnamese language patterns. The primary solution identified by third-year EFL students included consciously thinking in English during speech.**

Keywords- **English speaking performance; mother tongue; negative transfer; error analysis; perceptions.**

1. INTRODUCTION

English stands as the universal language in various fields, facilitating cooperation and information exchange (Rao, 2019). To achieve communicative efficiency and intelligibility, individuals frequently place a high priority on improving their productive English skills. In particular, according to Zaremba (2006), speaking appears to be the most crucial macro English skill needed for communication out of the four. Despite its significance, speaking is widely regarded as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. The difficulty often results in learners hesitating to communicate when faced with challenges in finding suitable words and expressions (Leong & Masoumeh, 2017). One of the reasons leading to these problems is the significant impact of the learners' native language (L1) on their speaking performance.

In the Vietnamese context, university students face challenges in English speaking performance due to differences between their L1 (Vietnamese) and L2 (English). Speaking skills, with an average score of 5.8, rank lowest among the four skills, according to International English Language Testing System (IELTS) statistics (2022). Several issues pertaining to speaking English are deemed to be the causes of this. Huynh (2020), for example, states that English major students at Ba Ria - Vung Tau University (BVU), Vietnam, have seven linguistic difficulties when learning how to speak English. These include (i) lack of vocabulary, (ii) improper usage of words in various contexts, (iii) difficulty in memorizing words, particularly those with multiple meanings, (iv) lack of grammar, (v) difficulty in constructing complete sentences to convey ideas, (vi) poor pronunciation, and (vii) tendency to think in Vietnamese first before expressing opinions. Students are most likely to experience the last difficulty (92.3%), suggesting that mother tongue interference, is one of the most common difficulties (Huynh, 2020).

At UD-UFLS, third-year EFL students often immerse themselves in English learning with prolonged exposure. However, their English speaking performance does not align with their prolonged exposure. This discrepancy often stems from many factors, amongst them the negative transfer of linguistic elements from their mother tongue, Vietnamese is a resounding one. In light of these challenges, we have decided to conduct a study entitled: ***"Exploring Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue on English Speaking Performance of Third-Year EFL Students at UD-UFLS"***. The study thus aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do third-year EFL students perceive Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance?
2. What are third-year EFL students' prevalent error types caused by Vietnamese negative transfer in their

English speaking performance?

3.   What are some factors contributing to third-year EFL students' errors regarding the Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance?

4.   What strategies can be suggested to avoid Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance of third-year EFL students?

In the annals of language transfer research, the predominant focus has traditionally centered on the transfer of receptive skills, notably reading (Kim & Piper, 2019; Koda, 1988) and writing (Bai & Qin, 2018; Meriläinen, 2010). This emphasis has often overlooked the exploration of productive skills. Acknowledging this gap in the literature, our research endeavors to redress the balance by shining a spotlight on the oft-neglected dimension of language transfer. Specifically, we aim to meticulously scrutinize English speaking performance, recognizing its pivotal role in communicative competence and language proficiency. Through this focused inquiry, we seek to enrich the discourse surrounding language transfer studies and offer valuable insights into the intricacies of language acquisition and production.

2.   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY
Review of Previous Studies
Research articles and academic papers, authored by scholars worldwide as well as within Vietnam, have extensively examined the phenomenon of negative transfer in language learning. Indeed, researchers from various linguistic backgrounds have long been intrigued by this field of study, dating back to Lado's seminal work in 1957, which delves into language errors and their relationship to language transfer. Subsequent studies by Gass and Selinker (2001), Shi (2015), and Zhao (2019) have made significant contributions to our comprehension of negative transfer. While these studies have adeptly pinpoint instances of language transfer, they have predominantly focused on outlining errors rather than delving into the underlying factors driving such transfer or considering learners' perceptions of these phenomena. Consequently, there remains a gap in our understanding of the mechanisms and motivations behind negative transfer, as well as its implications for language learning and teaching methodologies. Certain studies have also specifically examined the impact of negative transfer on English speaking performance. For example, Putra's (2021) research investigates the adverse phonetic effects stemming from the Indonesian phonetic system on English speaking performance among pre-service EFL teachers. Similarly, Huang's (2017) study scrutinizes the phonetic characteristics of Wenzhounese to elucidate their influence on EFL learners' pronunciation of consonants and vowels in English. Additionally, Ma and Tan's (2013) investigation dissects common pronunciation errors and proposes strategies for enhancing English pronunciation instruction. While these contributions have been invaluable in understanding pronunciation challenges, they have predominantly centered on phonetic aspects, overlooking other linguistic dimensions.

In the context of Vietnam, there has been a notable lack of emphasis on the negative transfer of mother tongue influence on English speaking performance. The predominant focus has, instead, been on writing skills. For example, Luu and Nguyen (2023) conduct a study aimed at understanding third-year ELT students' perceptions of how Vietnamese linguistic patterns affect their English writing. Similarly, Vu (2017) conducts empirical research to uncover how the Vietnamese language (L1) may impede the acquisition of English (L2). In his study, intralingual errors, particularly those related to word forms are in focus. This challenge stems from the disparities between English and Vietnamese grammar. In English, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs undergo inflections for person, number, tense, aspect, and voice. In contrast, Vietnamese does not possess such inflections. While considerable attention has been devoted to enhancing writing skills within the Vietnamese educational context, comparatively less focus has been placed on addressing the negative transfer of the mother tongue on English speaking performance. Huynh's (2020) research notably brings attention to this issue by revealing that students' awareness of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking is quite low. Moreover, her study underscores the prevalence of mother tongue usage among learners, especially in environments where multiple individuals share the same linguistic background. While her research provides valuable insights into the broader challenges associated with mother tongue interference in English speaking contexts, it does not delve into the specific types of errors stemming from such interference, nor does it explore the underlying factors contributing to these errors. This gap in the literature underscores the need for further investigation into the intricacies of negative transfer from Vietnamese to English in speaking performance and the factors shaping this phenomenon.

Generally speaking, international scientific research on negative transfer in language learning has predominantly focused on identifying instances of language transfer and pinpointing errors. However, there exists a notable lacuna in comprehending the underlying factors and learners' perspectives. Studies examining the impact of negative transfer on English speaking have predominantly fixated on phonetics, thereby overlooking other linguistic dimensions. In the

context of Vietnam, domestic scientific researches have scrutinized negative transfer from Vietnamese to English, particularly emphasizing writing skills. Nonetheless, there remains a dearth of insight into negative transfer's influence on English speaking among Vietnamese learners, thus underscoring the imperative for a comprehensive investigation. To this stage, it is important to revisit the notions of some key concepts underpinning the investigation.

Revisiting Key Concepts
Speaking Performance
Speaking Performance, as outlined by Irawan et al. (2022), refers to the observable and measurable act of individuals conveying messages to listeners following specific rules to ensure clear understanding. In the same vein, Al Hafiz and Gushendra (2021) assert that speaking performance holds a crucial role among basic language skills due to its widespread application. To simulate real-life situations beyond the classroom, students are provided with tools and equipment. Effectively delivering meaning or messages to listeners, speaking performance is affirmed as the skill to accurately use language for information transfer in real-time instances of language use. In other words, speaking performance refers to conveying messages audibly in classroom, involving the translation of abstract thoughts into meaningful sounds for effective communication and English language learning.

Mother Tongue and Language Transfer
Mother Tongue, as simply put, denotes the language acquired by an individual from birth, typically transmitted by their parents or immediate family members. According to Chomsky (1986), a child learns his/her mother tongue thanks to extended exposure to it within his/her environment or community. In this study, the mother tongue is Vietnamese because the paper's population and samples concentrate on students coming from Vietnam. *Language Transfer,* as defined by Gass and Selinker (1983), refers to the way one utilizes one's existing knowledge of a native or other languages to aid in learning a second or additional language. Odlin (1989), in his comprehensive book on the subject, describes language transfer as the impact stemming from the differences between the target language and any other language previously learned, even if learned incompletely or imperfectly. Moreover, Sabbah (2015, p. 271) states that negative transfer is "the transfer of rules which impedes or has harmful influence on the command of rules of L2" because of differences between L1 and L2. In fact, language transfer is a significant area of study within SLA research. Lado (1975) introduces the comparative analysis hypothesis, positing that the negative influence of one's native language on L2 learning outweighs any positive effects. This hypothesis, rooted in behaviorism and structuralism linguistics, suggests that the greater the disparity between the native language and the target language, the more challenging the SLA process becomes. That is to say, learners often find it easier to grasp language points in the target language that are similar to their native language. Ellis (1999) further asserts that the difficulty of acquiring an L2 is closely related to the differences between the native language and the target language, with greater discrepancies leading to more obstacles and errors in the learning process. However, individual cognitive levels can influence the extent of this learning difficulty. Put it simply, while language transfer can present challenges in SLA, it can also have positive effects on language learning when understood and leveraged effectively. However, when not managed properly, negative transfer can impede language acquisition, manifesting in errors and difficulties stemming from the interference of the learner's L1 with L2.

Negative Transfer
In terms of negative transfer, Odlin (1989) refers it to the improper or inappropriate use of language means, styles, or rules from one's native language when acquiring a foreign language. In similar terms, Ellis (1994) claims that negative transfer arises when learners mistakenly apply rules, structures, or habits from their native language to the target language, resulting in errors or impediments to learning. These errors are related to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and so on. In the descriptions of Selinker and Gass (2008), negative transfer is referred to as instances where elements of the native language hinder the acquisition or expression of the target language. Put it simply, negative transfer refers to the interference of the learners' mother tongue which leads to errors within the process of language acquisition.

Negative transfer can significantly impact English speaking performance across various dimensions. However, in this paper, the focus is on some linguistic aspects of negative transfer from the mother tongue to English speaking performance. It is assumed that understanding these linguistic dimensions of negative transfer is crucial for devising effective strategies to mitigate its effects and enhance learners' English speaking performance. Negative transfer to English speaking performance frequently leads to errors in verb tense usage, given Vietnamese's lack of the same tense distinctions present in English. For instance, learners might incorrectly omit verb conjugation, saying "He ***live** in Hanoi" instead of the accurate "He *lives* in Hanoi". Such discrepancies underscore the challenges learners face in conveying temporal relationships accurately in English due to their native language's grammatical structure. Moreover, according to Nguyen (2018), negative transfer from Vietnamese to English often results in speaking errors

regarding article usage, as Vietnamese lacks definite and indefinite articles. Consequently, learners may omit articles entirely or use them incorrectly. For example, they may say "I want to buy ***table**" instead of the correct "I want to buy *a table*"; or "She is ***doctor**" instead of "She is *a doctor*". This misuse or omission of articles highlights the challenge learners encounter in adapting to the subtle grammatical nuances of English, particularly in determining when and how to insert articles to specify or generalize nouns in speech production. Furthermore, Vietnamese learners of English often encounter challenges in adjusting to the word order differences between their native language and English. In Vietnamese, the standard word order places adjectives after nouns, whereas in English, adjectives typically precede nouns. Consequently, when speaking English, Vietnamese learners may inadvertently apply the word order pattern of their native language, resulting in errors such as placing the adjective after the noun (Le, 2023). For instance, in the sentence "She bought a ***dress beautiful**", the word order reflects the influence of Vietnamese syntax rather than English convention. This phenomenon underscores the importance of targeted instruction and practice to help learners internalize the distinct word order patterns of English, especially in spoken communication.

Error Analysis and Error Types
Error Analysis (EA), as described by Corder (1967), is a methodological approach to examining language learners' mistakes during the language acquisition process. Corder (1967) distinguishes between interlingual errors and intralingual errors. By analyzing errors, learners can work towards minimizing or eliminating them, while teachers can tailor their instruction to address areas of difficulty. Khansir (2012) puts it aptly that EA is a linguistic analysis method centered on the examination of errors made by language learners. It involves comparing these errors with the target language itself. The emphasis in EA lies in understanding the importance of learners' mistakes in the acquisition of a second language. In the EA Theory, three main types of errors are identified: *lexical, syntactic* and *discoursal.*

Lexical Errors
In the discourse surrounding lexical errors, Duskova (1969) emerges as a seminal figure, being among the earliest scholars to categorize them into four principal classifications, namely word choice errors, morphological errors, collocational errors, and register errors. Engber (1995) subsequently extends this taxonomy, delineating nine distinct categories within lexical errors. Conversely, James (1998) offers a streamlined classification, positing two primary types such as formal and semantic features. The scholarly landscape reveals a plethora of taxonomies regarding lexical errors. In this study, the taxonomy put forth by Shi (2015) is adopted with four out of six categories chosen for the sake of convenience. These selected categories are expounded upon as follows: *(i) Negative Transfer of Word Meaning* occurs when a learner's knowledge of one language, typically their mother tongue, influencing their understanding or usage of words in another language. For example, in Vietnamese, a single word like "đường" can have multiple corresponding forms in English, depending on the context, such as road, street, or way. Consequently, when rendering the phrase "con đường sự nghiệp" into English, Vietnamese speakers might mistakenly render it as "career ***way**" or "career ***road**" instead of the more appropriate "career *path*"; *(ii) Lexical Redundancy* arises when learners lack understanding of English words' meanings and when they are influenced by equivalent Vietnamese phrases. For instance, the Vietnamese phrase "đi vào" (enter) is often translated as "enter ***into**". However, "enter" alone suffices to convey the meaning; "into" is added due to the influence of the Vietnamese word "vào" (into); *(iii) Inappropriate Use of Collocations.* Many words that can be combined in Vietnamese may not form collocations in English. Vietnamese learners frequently overlook this distinction, assuming that these words function the same way as they do in Vietnamese. The influence of L1 negative transfer is evident in word collocations. For instance, since Vietnamese speakers say "uống thuốc", they often convey the same idea in English by combining "uống" (drink) and "thuốc" (medicine), resulting in the phrase "***drink** medicine", whereas the correct usage should be "*take* medicine"; and *(iv) Misuse of Countable Nouns and Uncountable Nouns* with some words being countable in one language but not in another. For example, the word "cừu" (sheep) is countable in Vietnamese. Consequently, learners might say "one sheep" and "two ***sheeps**" in English. These are incorrect English expressions influenced by Vietnamese language features, as the word "sheep" is uncountable in English. When referring to more than one sheep, people must use the word "sheep" in its original form.

Syntactic Errors
As aggregated from articles of two scholars such as Duong (2018) and Le (2016), there are six common syntactic errors encountered by Vietnamese students when learning English in total. These include *word order errors, verb tense and aspect errors, articles and determiners errors, prepositions errors, subject-verb agreement errors*, and *sentence formation errors.* These errors would be described as follows: *(i) Word Order Errors* occur when the order of words in a sentence is incorrect, e.g. "the ***bag blue beautiful**" instead of "the *blue beautiful bag*"; *(ii) Verb Tense and Aspect Errors* occur when verb tense usage is inconsistent, which affects clarity and meaning, e.g. "Yesterday, I ***take** an exam" instead of "Yesterday, I *took* an exam"; *(iii) Articles and Determiners Errors* usually mean articles are missing and/or are used in the wrong way, e.g. "He went to ***supermarket**" instead of "He went to *the*

supermarket"; *(iv) Prepositions Errors* encompass inaccuracies in preposition usage, incorrect positioning of prepositions, erroneous application of prepositional phrases, and similar mistakes, e.g. students may say "I will meet you *in next Friday" or "The meeting will start at 9 a.m. *in Monday"; *(v) Subject-Verb Agreement Errors* occur when the subject and verb of a sentence do not agree, e.g. "Hung and Mai *is coming" instead of "Hung and Mai *are* coming"; and *(vi) Sentence Formation Errors* are errors empathized with grammar and mechanics in sentences, Vietnamese students often write sentences with various grammatical errors, such as using passive voice incorrectly, failing to maintain parallel structure, or encountering pronoun disagreement, e.g. "The scientific conference *will be taken place next week in the city's convention center" instead of "The scientific conference *will take place* next week in the city's convention center". This taxonomy of errors with prescriptions as shown above will be used as the analytical framework for examining the negative impact of mother tongue on English speaking performance of Vietnamese students in this study.

Discoursal Errors
Discoursal errors frequently arise in the speech of learners, presenting a variety of challenges that reflect difficulties in structuring and articulating thoughts coherently within the realm of spoken communication. As posited by Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion and coherence stand as fundamental pillars of proficient communication. Errors concerning cohesion and coherence can impede the clarity and comprehension of a message, rendering English speaking performance unnatural and disjointed. Therefore, this study endeavors to conduct an error analysis focusing on the intricacies of coherence and cohesion. *Cohesion* pertains to the grammatical and lexical connections that interlace disparate parts of a discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Errors in cohesion materialize when there are inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the utilization of cohesive devices, including pronouns, conjunctions, reference words, and lexical items. One of the most common errors encountered by English learners in Vietnam relates to conjunctions, e.g. Vietnamese speakers might say "Mặc dù trời mưa to nhưng chúng tôi vẫn phải đi học". Due to the influence of their native language, they may incorrectly translate this to English as "Although it is pouring, *but we have to go to school". However, the correct English expression is "Although it is pouring, we have to go to school". *Coherence*, however, refers to the cohesive flow and logical development of ideas within a text, achieved through skillful organization and arrangement of thoughts (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Lack of coherence can result in disjointed or illogical transitions between sentences or paragraphs (e.g. The sun shines as birds fly. In the kitchen, a cookbook reminds me of childhood. Laughter fills the street as I think about a meeting. The smell of bread triggers memories, but I forgot my phone, causing anxiety about tasks ahead). The observed lack of coherence in verbal expression within an English-speaking context is frequently attributable to negative transfer from Vietnamese linguistic norms. In Vietnamese communication, a characteristic feature involves abrupt transitions between topics without explicit linking phrases. Consequently, when such conversational habits are directly translated into English, the resultant discourse often appears disjointed. This presents a challenge for English-speaking audiences accustomed to a more methodical and logically connected style of verbal communication.

Perceptions
The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary provides a definition of perceptions as the concepts, beliefs, or mental images that result from one's understanding or interpretation of something. Nevertheless, this definition has its limitations. A thorough comprehension or visualization of an object, event, or phenomenon requires the engagement of all five senses. According to Heil (1983), perceptions are a broad concept that involves the utilization of our senses. In this study, perceptions denote the beliefs and subjective evaluations held by third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS concerning the negative transfer of mother tongue on their English speaking performance. It encompasses the individual perspectives through which these students perceive and comprehend the significance and relevance of language transfer phenomena. Perceptions in this research cover various aspects, such as the perceived impact of mother tongue interference on English speaking performance, the degree to which language transfer influences communication effectiveness, and the methods students utilize to counteract negative transfer effects. Furthermore, perceptions entail recognizing specific linguistic characteristics or patterns influenced by the native language and their implications for the accuracy and fluency of spoken English. Additionally, perceptions encompass the attitudes and beliefs of students toward language transfer, including their perceived difficulties in language learning and communication it may entail.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research Design and Research Methods
The study employed a combination of *error analysis (EA)*, *quantitative* and *qualitative approaches*. *Error analysis* was utilized to identify and analyze errors made by third-year EFL students during their English speaking performance. *Quantitative approach* was utilized to present data through statistical tables and figures, which uncovered third-year EFL students' perceptions regarding the adverse effects of Vietnamese language transfer on

English speaking performance, factors contributing to errors in Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance, and strategies to alleviate errors stemming from mother tongue influences. Simultaneously, *qualitative approach* was employed to thoroughly examine and elaborate on the aforementioned quantitative data.

Setting, Population and Sampling

This study is carried out at UD-UFLS where undergraduate programmes in foreign languages are offered. Chief amongst those are the Bachelor of Arts in the English Language offered by Faculty of English (FE) and the Bachelor of Arts in English Language Teaching offered by Faculty of Foreign Language Teacher Education (FLTE). Students in these programmes are often known as English-majored students or EFL students for short.

For this study, the research participants consist of a cohort of third-year EFL students, comprising 45 students from FLTE and 59 students from FE. This selection is deliberate for several reasons. Firstly, these third-year EFL students are chosen as a matter of convenience and accessibility. Secondly, they are currently engaged in the Course C1.4 (Speaking), which aligns well with the research objectives. Ultimately, by targeting this demographic, the research aims to provide insights that enhance language learning practices and address challenges in English speaking performance specifically among third-year EFL students.

Instruments

Oral Corpora

Oral corpora of L2 performances by third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS following Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) format were gathered. These corpora comprised samples of spoken language produced by the research participants in the C1.4 courses, facilitating a thorough analysis of the common errors observed in their English speaking performances. According to José and Vizcaíno (2007), oral corpora constitute excellent sources of real data with which to undertake inductive research into language phenomena.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire utilized in this study was adapted from Luu and Nguyen (2023). However, as the study focuses on a different aspect of English language skills, these sets of questionnaires were tailored and modified to better align with the study objectives. By incorporating both multiple-choice and five-point Likert scale formats, the questionnaire aimed to comprehensively capture pertinent data for our research purposes. The questionnaire comprises four parts: (i) students' background information, (ii) perceptions of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking, (iii) factors contributing to errors in Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance, and (iv) ways to avoid errors caused by influences of mother tongue.

Interviews

The interviews conducted in this study were based on Irene et al.'s work (2018), with interview questions being tailored and expanded upon to prompt participants to provide more thorough and insightful responses. This adaptation process was aimed at improving the interviews' ability to capture nuanced perspectives regarding the impact of the mother tongue on English speaking performance. The interview questions were designed to explore specific key areas: (i) students' comprehension of the concept of "Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking", (ii) factors contributing to errors in Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance, and (iii) students' strategies to deal with negative transfer of mother tongue in English speaking performance.

Data Collection

During the initial phase, our group sought permission to record students' English speaking performances following VSTEP format. A total of 64 oral corpora were obtained. In the second phase, questionnaires were administered to 104 third-year EFL students. The questionnaires were distributed using Google Forms, with students instructed to provide thoughtful and sincere responses. Once sufficient data had been collected for the study, the form was closed. Participants were assured that their answers would be treated confidentially and utilized solely for this scientific investigation. During the third phase, ten randomly selected participants engaged in online, semi-structured interviews conducted in English. With explicit consent, the researchers could facilitate each interview session, which lasted approximately twenty minutes. Participants were assigned numerical identifiers from *I-1 (Interviewee 1)* to *I-10 (Interviewee-10)* prior to the interviews' commencement, and they were prompted to address the six specified interview questions.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of third-year EFL students' oral responses in the speaking section, a meticulous analysis was conducted utilizing error analysis techniques. Lexical errors were categorized following Shi's taxonomy (2015), while

syntactic errors were classified according to the taxonomies proposed by Duong (2018) and Le (2016). Discoursal errors were categorized following the taxonomy of Halliday and Hasan (1976). The process involved attentive listening to the speeches, followed by transcription into text format to identify errors based on established error analysis theories. Subsequently, the errors were categorized into distinct groups and presented in tables and figures. Conclusions regarding the nature of the errors were then drawn and discussed.

Simultaneously, the data collected from 104 participants was processed using SPSS 26.0 and Microsoft Excel to explore various variables pertaining to the perceptions of third-year EFL students, factors contributing to errors resulting from the negative transfer, and strategies to mitigate such errors. The rates of these variables were measured and visually represented through tables and figures. Finally, conclusions were derived from the analysis of the questionnaire data.

The qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews underwent coding and analysis through thematic analysis. This process entailed identifying, examining, and summarizing patterns or themes present within the data. Employing Maree's (2010) coding method, significant analytical units were identified from transcribed data. Meticulous recording and scrutinization of each response were to make sure key data points and recurring themes were identified. These identified themes were subsequently compared with the quantitative data to draw meaningful inferences.

4.   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance via Third-Year EFL Students' Oral Corpora
In this study, errors in the oral corpora were classified into three distinct categories: *lexical*, *syntactic*, and *discoursal errors* with each category encompassing a range of manifestations. *Lexical errors* were further subdivided into four primary classifications: (i) negative transfer of word meaning; (ii) lexical redundancy; (iii) inappropriate use of collocations; and (iv) misuse of countable nouns and uncountable nouns (Shi, 2015). *Syntactic errors* were made up of discrepancies in (i) word order; (ii) verb tense and aspect; (iii) articles and determiners; (iv) prepositions; (v) subject-verb agreement; and (vi) sentence formation (Duong, 2018; Le, 2016). *Discoursal errors* encompassed (i) cohesion errors and (ii) coherence errors. These types of errors constituted the primary sources of discoursal errors, as posited by Halliday and Hasan (1976).

From the analysis of 64 oral corpora gathered from third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS, a total of 351 errors could be unveiled. More specifically, discoursal errors (225) outnumbered both lexical (59) and syntactic errors (67). Among these, seven distinct categories emerged as the most prevalent: *cohesion errors* (169), *coherence errors* (56), *inappropriate use of collocations* (23), *verb tense and aspect errors* (19), *sentence formation* (17), *lexical redundancy* (14), and *negative transfer of word meaning* (13). This comprehensive examination emphasized the complex nature of linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners, pinpointing specific areas where targeted instructional interventions could enhance language proficiency and communication effectiveness.

Lexical Errors
Among the total 351 errors identified, 59 were related to lexis. These lexical errors spanned across different categories, with 13 instances stemming from *negative transfer of word meaning* (22%), 14 from *lexical redundancy* (24%), 23 from *inappropriate use of collocations* (39%), and nine from *misuse of countable and uncountable nouns* (15%). **Figure 1-2** provide detailed breakdowns of the percentages and occurrences of various sub-categories of lexical errors found in the oral corpora of third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS.

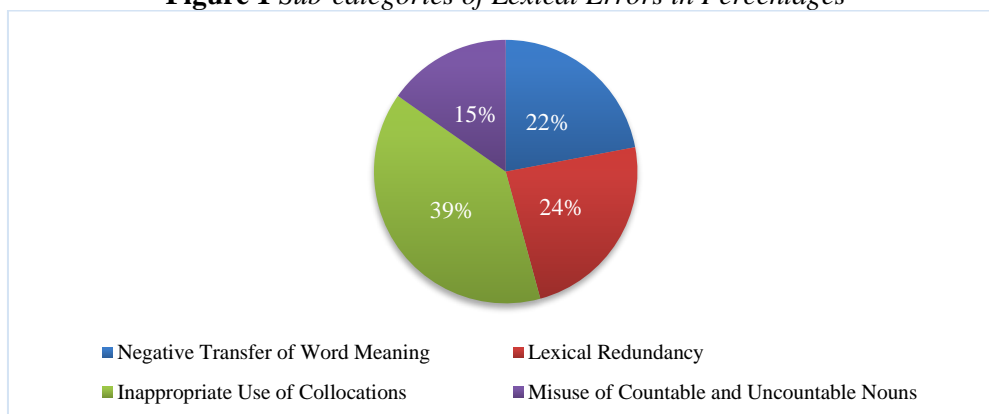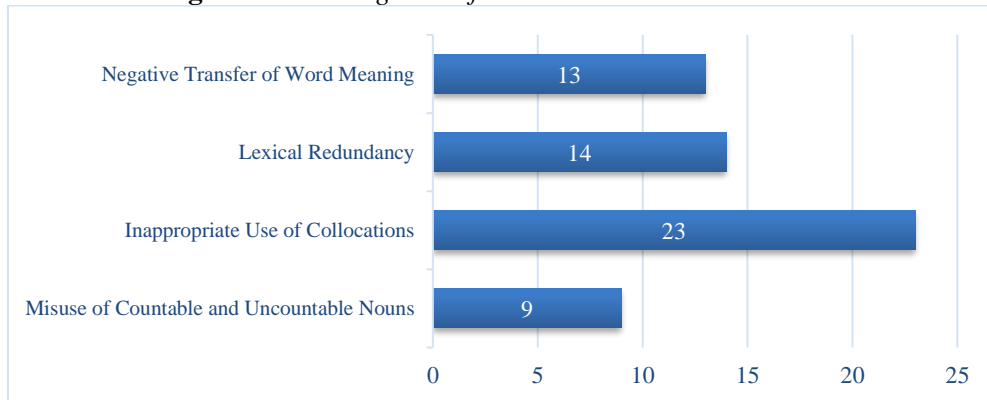**Figure 1** *Sub-categories of Lexical Errors in Percentages*

Legend:
- ■ Negative Transfer of Word Meaning
- ■ Lexical Redundancy
- ■ Inappropriate Use of Collocations
- ■ Misuse of Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Figure 2 *Sub-categories of Lexical Errors in Occurrences*

Negative Transfer of Word Meaning

The phenomenon of *negative transfer of word meaning* comprised 13 distinct errors, constituting 22% of all lexical errors recorded. It has been commonly assumed that each Vietnamese word possesses a direct English counterpart and that the lexicons of the two languages exhibit perfect symmetry, with corresponding words aligning neatly between them. However, a more nuanced examination revealed a departure from this simplistic notion. More specifically, Vietnamese and English lexicons do not adhere strictly to symmetrical equivalency. While a single Vietnamese word might indeed possess multiple corresponding forms in English, these forms often carry distinct meanings contingent upon context. Consequently, while interchangeable usage was common within Vietnamese, the rendering into English requires careful consideration, as each word assumes a unique semantic nuance. For example, one student went on like this, "Last month, I ***watched** a distressing accident unfold right before my eyes". While the Vietnamese translation, "Tháng trước, tôi đã *thấy* một vụ tai nạn thương tâm diễn ra trước mắt", is grammatically correct, the use of "watched" in the English sentence is not appropriate. Actually, it should be replaced by *"saw"*. Arguably, in English, the verbs *"see"* and *"watch"* carry distinct connotations and are employed in different contexts. *"See"* typically denotes a simple act of perceiving or witnessing something visually, without necessarily implying deliberate or prolonged attention. Conversely, *"watch"* implies a deliberate and sustained act of observation, suggesting active attention over a period of time. In the context of witnessing an accident, *"see"* is more appropriate, as accidents are usually sudden events perceived in a fleeting moment, rather than intentionally observed over time. Consequently, the phrase *"Last month, I saw a distressing accident unfold right before my eyes"* accurately communicates the idea that the individual perceived the accident without implying intentional observation over an extended duration. Another student said, "I made a ***large mistake**". While the Vietnamese translation, "sai lầm lớn", is accurate, the use of *"large"* in this English sentence is erroneous. Instead, *"big"* should have been employed. This differentiation, albeit subtle, bears significant relevance. While *"large"* typically conveys physical dimensions, *"big"* is more aptly associated with significance or magnitude in abstract contexts such as errors or mistakes. Therefore, the phrase *"I made a big mistake"* would have been more appropriate in conveying the intended meaning of the error being substantial or noteworthy. The linguistic inaccuracies observed among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS mirrored the findings documented in Shi's (2015) research, exhibiting instances of negative transfer of word meaning. This congruence with Shi's (2015) error patterns signifies a recurrent challenge in language acquisition among EFL learners.

Lexical Redundancy

Lexical redundancy constituted 14 errors, comprising 24% of lexical errors among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS. These errors emerged when students inserted unnecessary words in their speech performance. Such redundancy stemmed from a deficiency in comprehension of English word meanings among these EFL students and from the negative transfer of the Vietnamese. As an illustration, one student said, "I ***go** to play football with my friends in the evening". While this literally reflects the Vietnamese wording "Tôi đi chơi đá bóng với những người bạn của tôi vào buổi tối", in English, the statement was more appropriately conveyed as *"I play football with my friends in the evening"*. Another instance extracted from the oral corpora of third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS was articulated as, "We had to cooperate ***together** in the football match". While the Vietnamese statement is precise, the English rendition should simply state, *"We had to cooperate in the football match"*. These errors resemble the findings articulated by Huynh (2020), who noted that mother tongue interference, particularly the influence of Vietnamese, represented one of the prevalent challenges. Vietnamese students often encountered negative transfer, which could pose obstacles to acquiring a second language and disrupted the seamless transition to English proficiency.

Inappropriate Use of Collocations

As can be seen, *inappropriate use of collocations* was represented the highest proportion (39%) with a total of 23 errors. This phenomenon stemmed from the tendency of EFL students in Vietnam, who rely on their native language when forming and using English word combinations. To illustrate, consider an example from a third-year EFL student who stated, "I am the person who always tries to ***catch** the opportunities that are beneficial for me". In this instance, the student aimed to convey the Vietnamese phrase "nắm bắt cơ hội" (where *"nắm"* is literally rendered into to *"catch"* in English). The use of *"catch"* here stems from the multiple meanings of *"nắm"* in Vietnamese, including *"grasp"* or *"catch"*. Consequently, the student mistakenly assumed that "nắm bắt cơ hội" should be put into "***catch** the opportunities" in English, whereas the correct collocation should be *"take/seize the opportunities"*. Another instance of inappropriate use of collocations was discerned in the mistakes made by third-year EFL students in employing the verb "create". For example, certain students erroneously articulated "***create** a mistake" (tạo ra lỗi lầm) instead of the correct expression *"make a mistake"*. The confusion among students regarding these two words stemmed from the ambiguous delineation of the term *"create",* compounded by the absence of analogous collocations in Vietnamese. Based on these examples, it can be suggested that the primary reason why *inappropriate use of collocations* was the most prevalent lexical error was the habitual reliance on native language patterns or the influence of one's mother tongue. This reliance posed significant challenges for error correction among English learners in Vietnam, especially EFL students. Similarly, Luu and Nguyen (2023) highlighted the tendency of EFL learners to translate words directly from Vietnamese into English. These students often disregarded correct collocations and instead translated Vietnamese phrases word-for-word into English, assuming the resulting phrases were grammatically correct in English.

Misuse of Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Regarding four types of lexical errors, errors related to *misuse of countable and uncountable nouns* made up for the lowest proportion - 15% with nine errors in total. This phenomenon occurred when EFL students could not distinguish between the countable and uncountable nouns, and their careless use of nouns in adding inflection *-(e)s* at the end of each noun. For instance, one student, influenced by Vietnamese linguistic patterns, remarked in her speaking performance, "My mother may prefer going to the gym because it could offer her better ***equipments** and ***furnitures**". In the student's Vietnamese mindset, any reference to equipment or furniture is perceived as countable, leading to the misuse or inadvertent addition of the inflection *-(e)s* for these nouns. Moreover, another student said, "I bet that all of my friends would like some ***foods** and ***coffees**, so eating out seems the best choice for dating" instead of *"I bet that all of my friends would like some **food** and **coffee**, so eating out seems the best choice for dating"*. This reflected a similar pattern of overgeneralization influenced by the Vietnamese language structure. To this point, it is obvious that these errors arose from the absence of indicators of plurality like the endings *-s* or *-es* of its English counterpart. What is more, as an isolating language, the Vietnamese language allows the insertion of such markers as *"những"* or "*các"* to indicate plurality, making the boundary between countable and uncountable nouns in Vietnamese somewhat ambiguous. When learners switch to English in their speech, they might unintentionally add plural nominal markers or misused nouns due to this lack of clarity. This resonates also with Vu (2017) who labeled these errors as intralingual errors, specifically those concerning word forms. This is attributable to the differences between English and Vietnamese grammar. While word categories in English can have inflection for person, number, tense, aspect, and voice like regular nouns being pluralized by adding *-s* or *-es*, Vietnamese lacks such inflections, making third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS frequently fail to inflect English words when necessary, either retaining the original word forms or employing incorrect ones.

Syntactic Errors

Of the 351 errors detected in the oral corpora of third-year EFL students, 67 were syntactic in nature. These syntactic errors covered a range of categories: seven instances of errors in *word order* (11%), 19 errors in *verb tense and aspect* (28%), ten errors in the category of *articles and determiners* (15%), eight errors in *prepositions* (12%), six errors in *subject-verb agreement* (9%), and 17 errors in *sentence formation* (25%). **Figure 3-4** illustrate in detail the percentages and occurrences of these different sub-categories of syntactic errors recorded in the oral corpora of third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS.

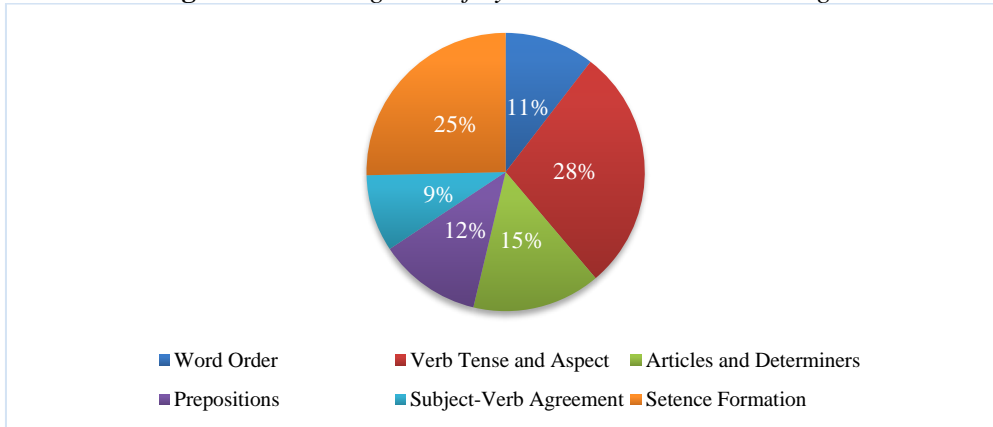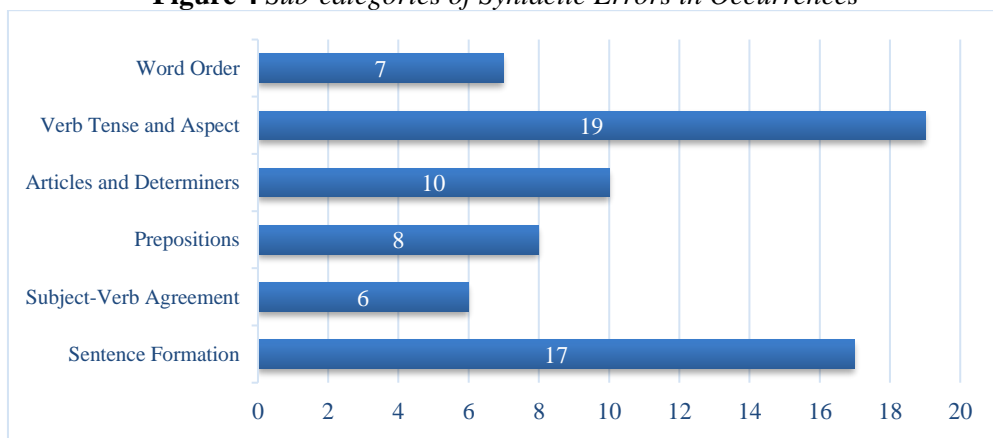**Figure 3** *Sub-categories of Syntactic Errors in Percentages*

Figure 4 *Sub-categories of Syntactic Errors in Occurrences*

Word Order Errors

Among the 67 syntactic errors identified, 11% pertained to *word order*. An observable correlation emerged between students' speaking performance and the influence of their native language's word order conventions on their English usage. In contrast to Vietnamese, where word order carried less significance, English mandated strict adherence to word order for conveying precise meanings within sentences. Notably, errors in adjective placement emerged as a prominent issue, as English mandated adjectives preceding nouns, unlike Vietnamese where the order was reversed. For instance, a third-year EFL student's statement, "Participating in movie club is the ***activity helpful**", reflected a literal transfer from Vietnamese with the adjective following the noun. This oversight highlights the challenge encountered by third-year EFL students in adapting to English word order norms. Moreover, while Vietnamese lacks specific adjective order rules, English necessitates adherence to established guidelines. Consequently, Vietnamese EFL students often struggled to recall and apply these rules correctly, leading to errors in adjective sequencing. To Illustrate, a student's assertion, "The first negative point of a digital camera is that it seems an ***outdated useless** device to a college student like me", revealed a failure to adhere to English adjective order conventions. Mark (2013) outlines the order of adjectives using the mnemonic "OSASCOMP", which stands for Opinion, Size, Age, Shape, Color, Origin, Material, and Purpose. Consequently, in English, the appropriate sequence would be *"a useless outdated device",* highlighting the precedence of opinion-based adjectives over those pertaining to age. Such instances underscored the need for targeted instruction and practice in mastering English word order and adjective placement rules among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS.

Verb Tense and Aspect Errors

Among the 67 syntactic errors identified, 28% were attributed to *verb tense and aspect errors*, marking the highest proportion. This phenomenon stems from the significant contrast between the native language (L1) and the target language (L2) for third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS. In English, grammatical tense and aspect are typically indicated by inflectional morphemes such as *"-ed"* or *"-ing"* while Vietnamese utilize time particles and adverbials like *"đã"* (for past simple tense) or *"đang"* (for present continuous tense). For example, when describing a past activity like "Tôi đã đi du lịch nước ngoài tuần vừa qua", one student erroneously stated "I ***travel** abroad last week" instead of the correct form *"I traveled abroad last week"*. This confusion arises from the fact that, unlike English, the

form of the verb in Vietnamese remains unchanged in all circumstances (*"đi du lịch"* means both *"travel"* and *"traveled"*). Moreover, in some instances, tense markers in Vietnamese are optional ("Tôi đã đi du lịch nước ngoài tuần vừa qua" is equivalent to "Tôi đi du lịch nước ngoài tuần vừa qua"), resulting in potential ambiguity as both forms conveyed the same tense regardless of the presence of the past tense marker. These errors predominantly occurred due to the interference of EFL students' mother tongue, particularly concerning tense and aspect, when transitioning to English.

Articles and Determiners Errors
Out of the total errors recorded, 15% were related to *articles and determiners*, with ten errors being identified in this category. These errors originally resulted from the lack of parallels of English definite article ("*the*") and indefinite articles ("*a*" and "*an*") in Vietnamese. Therefore, EFL students sometimes make mistakes when using English articles, especially missing or misusing them. For example, when giving supporting ideas, a third-year EFL student at UD-UFLS said "So, I do think that traveling by plane is ***best choice** for them" without using the article *"the"* before the noun phrase to make ***"the best choice".*** Another example of EFL students' errors related to misusing articles was when they could not distinguish the differences between English definite article *("the")* and indefinite articles *("a"* and *"an")* and said "I have played ***a guitar** since I was a kid of seven. So, I would like to apply for the music club". In this case, "guitar" is a musical instrument; therefore, the speaker must add the article *"the"* before the word "guitar". What can be drawn from these examples is that since there are no such articles in Vietnamese language like its English counterpart, it baffled many learners, leading to confusion in recognizing the proper use of articles.

Prepositions Errors
Among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS, syntactic errors related to prepositions comprised 12% of syntactic errors, totalling eight instances. To be more specific, the predominant issues observed were the lack of prepositions and the misuse of wrong prepositions with adjectives and verbs in the students' English speaking performance. For instance, examples like "Watching movies for a long period could ***result** sore eyes…" and "... I bet they would be **excited *in doing** this job" underscored these challenges. Additionally, some participants exhibited difficulties with prepositions in idiomatic expressions or collocations, as evidenced by phrases such as "***In my point of view**, joining a music club is boring…" instead of the correct rendition *"**From my point of view**, joining a music club is boring…".*

Subject-Verb Agreement Errors
Among the syntactic errors, *subject-verb agreement* accounted for the lowest proportion (9%), totaling only six instances. These errors as observed among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS might have stemmed from differences between English and Vietnamese grammar. In English, verbs agree with their subjects in terms of person and number, while Vietnamese verb stems keep their invariant form. For example, regardless of whether the subject is "Tôi" (I) or "Anh ấy" (He), the verb "ăn" (eat) remains the same in Vietnamese. Consequently, third-year EFL students often exhibited errors such as "I eat" and "He ***eat**" in their English speaking performance due to negative transfer from their L1. However, native speakers of English as a second language would correctly use different verb forms after the noun, such as *"I **eat**"* and *"He **eats**".*

Sentence Formation Errors
Of all types of syntactic errors, *sentence formation errors*, made up 25%, or 17 errors being recorded from the oral corpora. The most common errors regarding sentence formation errors are related to *passive voice structure*. On the one hand, in English, passive voice is commonly used when the focus is on the action and the object of a sentence rather than the subject, and this passive construction "Subject + to be + past participle (by object)" is for reporting or stating a fact, especially in science documents and technology manual instructions. Given some similarities with the English language regarding passive voice structure, the Vietnamese passive construction is different in some aspects. For instance, when Vietnamese students want to express the idea that someone or something is affected by others, it will be presented in the form "Ai/ Vật gì + bị/ được cái gì" (Sb/St + passive marker + verb). In this case, "be" in the English structure can be rendered into Vietnamese with the insertion of "*bị*" or "*được*" in front of the main verb. Nevertheless, only transitive verbs in English can be changed into the passive. That is to say, students often made errors - changing the intransitive into the passive form, like "The sun ***is shined** by the sky" to express the idea of *"The sun **shines** in the sky".* In this case, *"shine"* is an intransitive verb, which cannot be turned into passive forms.

Discoursal Errors
Among the total 351 errors observed, discoursal errors constituted 225, surpassing both lexical and syntactic errors in prevalence. Within this category, *cohesion errors* took precedence, accounting for 169 instances (75%), while *coherence errors* trailed behind, totaling 56 instances (25%). This notable prevalence emphasizes the difficulties faced by third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS in structuring and organizing discourse effectively, indicating specific

areas where focused instructional interventions could significantly improve overall communication proficiency and coherence. **Figures 5-6** provide comprehensive breakdowns of the percentages and occurrences of two sub-categories of discoursal errors identified in the oral corpora of third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS.

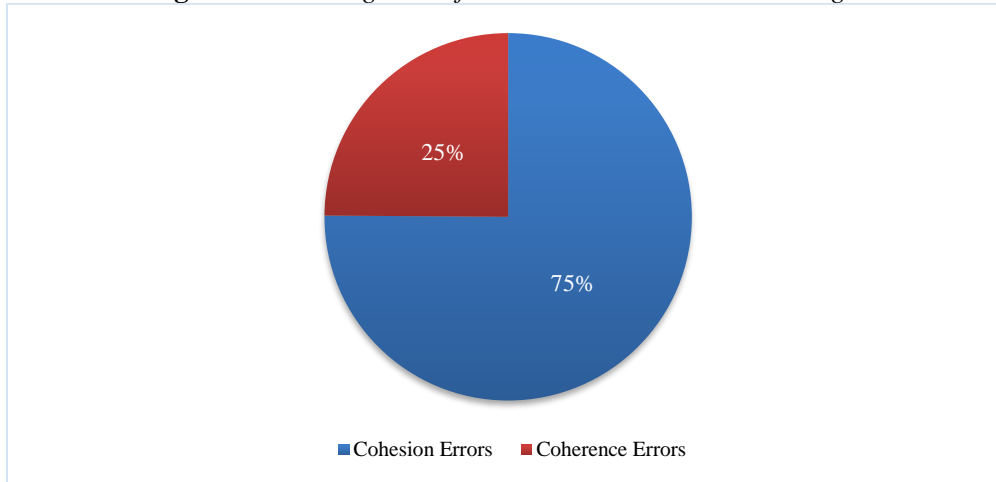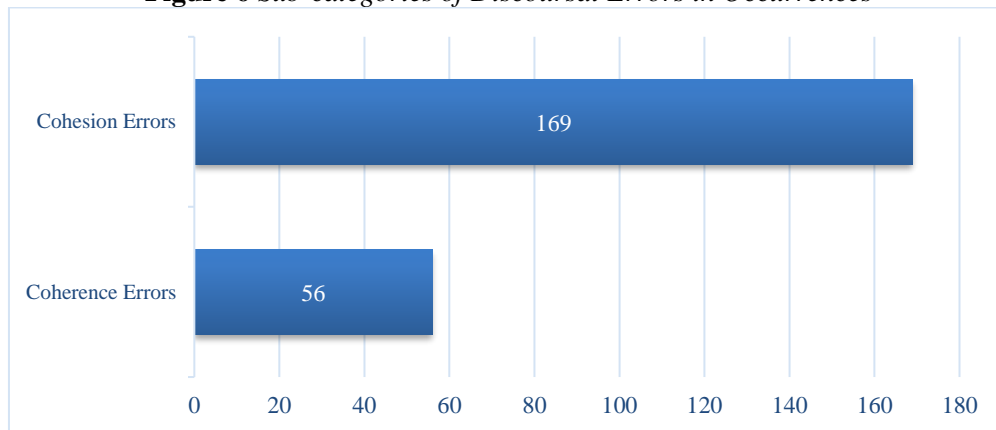**Figure 5** *Sub-categories of Discoursal Errors in Percentages*

Figure 6 *Sub-categories of Discoursal Errors in Occurrences*

Cohesion Errors

Cohesion errors, comprising 75% of discoursal errors with a total of 169 errors, were notably significant in English speaking performance influenced by negative transfer from Vietnamese. Many of these errors resulted from the *improper use of conjunctions* to connect clauses. For example, some students erroneously employed both *"because"* and *"so"* to denote a causal relationship, as demonstrated in the sentence, "**Because** women are no longer willing to settle for a man solely for security and stability, ***so** the number of single mothers increases nowadays". This error arose from the occurrence of the Vietnamese lexical pair *"vì"* and *"nên"* to denote causality. The same principle applies with the instance "**Although** experiencing stressors may not be pleasant, ***but** they may force you to solve a problem" whereby the lexical pair *"dù"* and *"nhưng"* collocate to indicate concession. However, in English, the use of a single conjunction sufficed to express the relationship between clauses. Thus, the correct sentences should be *"**Because** women are no longer willing to settle for a man solely for security and stability, the number of single mothers increases nowadays"* or *"Women are no longer willing to settle for a man solely for security and stability, **so** the number of single mothers increases nowadays"; "**Although** experiencing stressors may not be pleasant, they may force you to solve a problem"* or *"Experiencing stressors may not be pleasant, **but** they may force you to solve a problem"*. These examples signify a noticeable disparity in conjunction usage between Vietnamese and English, leading to errors made by Vietnamese learners of English in the act of verbal production.

Third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS also encountered cohesion errors concerning *unclear referencing*. This can be seen in the verbal expression like "Walking through the forest, I spotted a bird, and I took a picture of ***it**, which was breathtaking", which signifies an example of ambiguous reference of *"it"*. This may call for the role of context in Vietnamese in clarifying the subject without the adoption of explicit pronouns. However, it is essential to specify the subject to avoid confusion in English, that is to discern whether *"it"* refers to the bird or the forest. This ambiguity

disrupted the flow of conversation and impedes effective communication. As such, in spoken English, negative transfer from Vietnamese could lead to such cohesion errors as unclear referencing, making it challenging for listeners to grasp the speaker's intended message. These findings resonated with the seminal work of Halliday and Hasan (1976), elucidating how cohesion errors from negative transfer could engender confusion and cause misuse of conjunctions and referencing.

Coherence Errors

Coherence errors, totaling 56 instances and comprising 25% of discoursal errors, emerged as the predominant issue observed among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS. An illustrative example of this phenomenon was evidenced in a sample speaking response provided by one student when answering the question "In what ways does stress affect our health and life?": *"When stress happens, it messes with our health and stuff in all kinds of ways. Like, it can make us feel anxious or depressed, and it can also give us headaches or stomachaches or whatever. And, um, it can mess with our relationships and stuff, like, making it hard to sleep and messing with how we work. Yeah, stress is a pain."* This response lacked coherence due to negative transfer from Vietnamese to English speaking performance. What is clearly shown in the Vietnamese discourse is a structured approach with explicit linking phrases as well as a clear progression of ideas. However, when directly rendered into English, this structured approach often fails to ensure coherence. The English response thus lacked clear transitions between ideas, resulting in disjointed and fragmented speech. The speaker was recorded to jump between different effects of stress without providing logical connections between them. Besides, the use of filler words like *"um"* and *"like"* further contributed to the lack of coherence, as they interrupted the flow of thought without adding meaningful content. Overall, third-year EFL students struggled to maintain the same level of clarity and organization present in Vietnamese discourse, leading to a disjointed and incoherent response.

In sum, it is evident that discoursal errors, totaling 225 instances, substantially outnumbered lexical one with 59 instances, and syntactic errors with 67 instances. This significant discrepancy underscored the prominence of discoursal challenges in English speech by UD-UFLS students, highlighting the need for targeted intervention in language instruction for addressing these issues. This discussion of different types of errors experienced by EFL students at UD-UFLS in their English speaking now necessitate further exploration into the assumptions by these respondents regarding their negative transfer from L1 into L2 speech.

Perceptions of Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance

Table 1 *Perceptions of Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I understand that "Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance" includes challenges arising from differences in vocabulary, grammar, and discourse between the two languages.	2.46	0.82
I recognize that awareness of "Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance" is crucial for improving language proficiency and effective communication in English.	4.27	0.92
I understand that "Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance" can impact my English speaking.	4.46	0.98

Note. N = 104

Table 1 delineated participant evaluations regarding perceptions of Vietnamese negative transfer to their English speaking. The data revealed a conspicuous mean score of 4.46 *(SD=0.98),* indicative of a strong acknowledgment of Vietnamese negative transfer's potential impact on students' English speaking. Moreover, there seems to be a prevailing conviction in the significance of recognizing Vietnamese negative transfer's influence on English speaking performance could enhance language proficiency and facilitate effective communication in English, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.27 *(SD=0.92).* Subsequent interviews corroborated these findings, with two respondents accentuating the importance of comprehending the ramifications of Vietnamese negative transfer on English speaking performance and the advantages of awareness thereof:

"I firmly believe that having a thorough understanding of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking would enable me to identify errors more readily and rectify them with ease, thereby enhancing my English speaking performance significantly. This, in turn, would contribute to greater effectiveness in my English speech overall." (I-1)

"I believe that Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking can have a detrimental impact on my English proficiency. It often results in unclear communication, causing listeners to misunderstand my intended message and leading to various errors. As a Vietnamese student, it's natural for me to think in Vietnamese and then translate my thoughts into English when speaking. Consequently, I perceive this as a significant obstacle to my English speaking performance." (I-4)

Given the awareness among third-year EFL students regarding the adverse effects of L1 transfer on their L2 speaking output, most respondents demonstrated certain level of confusion in identifying the various types of L1 negative transfer affecting their English speaking *(M = 2.46, SD = 0.82)*. Additionally, some interviewees expressed difficulties in identifying these types:

"I'm sorry, but I can't identify different types of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking performance." (I-5)

"I'm not sure how to identify different types of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking." (I-7)

These findings align with those suggested by Huynh (2020) that students possessed a limited awareness of Vietnamese negative transfer to English speaking, which might indicate a potential lack of comprehension or attention to this phenomenon during verbal communication.

In other words, although the majority of participants acknowledged the detrimental effects of Vietnamese transfer on English speaking and the importance of recognizing it, only a small fraction of students were able to identify the different types of negative transfer from the mother tongue to their English speaking performance, and even fewer were aware of the factors leading to these errors. In the section that follows, a discussion of the factors contributing to the Vietnamese negative transfer to the students' speaking performance in English is presented.

Factors Contributing to Errors in Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance
Use of Vietnamese in English Speaking Performance

Table 2 *Use of Vietnamese in English Speaking Performance*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I translate questions from English to Vietnamese for better understanding.	4.24	0.56
I frequently translate English phrases into Vietnamese before speaking.	4.66	0.67
I use Vietnamese to create an outline for speaking.	4.21	0.75
I use Vietnamese to adjust English sentences while speaking.	4.02	0.97

Note. N = 104

Overall, as indicated in **Table 2**, the prevalence of Vietnamese usage in English speaking performance was evident, as reflected by all items scoring above 4 in mean ratings. Many participants frequently resorted to translating English phrases into Vietnamese before speaking *(M=4.66, SD=0.67)*, translating questions from English to Vietnamese for better comprehension *(M=4.24, SD=0.56)*, utilizing Vietnamese to outline their speaking points *(M=4.21, SD=0.75)*, and adjusting English sentences using Vietnamese while speaking *(M=4.02, SD=0.97)*. These findings echo those of Huynh (2020), who observed that students often tended to think in Vietnamese before expressing opinions (92.3%), suggesting that mother tongue interference, especially the Vietnamese element, posed one of the most prevalent challenges. Consequently, Vietnamese students frequently encountered negative transfer, which might impede the acquisition of L2 and hinder the smooth transition to English. Additionally, certain interviewees conveyed their thoughts that:

"Since English isn't my first language, I find myself translating any English phrases I come across to better grasp them. This way, I can respond to English questions more easily." (I-3)

"Translating Vietnamese into English boosts my confidence when speaking the language. It helps me ensure that I'm conveying my thoughts accurately and articulately." (I-5)

It can thus be observed that third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS frequently resorted to their native language to augment the efficacy of their English speaking endeavors. Evidently, during both the pre-speaking and while-speaking phases, many third-year EFL students utilized Vietnamese as a means to comprehend the speaking questions, formulate an outline, and refine their sentences. That is to say, the mother tongue has exerted a significant influence on their English speaking proficiency. In the discussion that follows, supplementary factors exacerbating errors from L1 transfer to L2 speaking performed by UD-UFLS students will be presented.

Other Factors Contributing to Errors in Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance

Table 3 *Other Factors Contributing to Errors in Vietnamese Negative Transfer to English Speaking Performance*

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Many differences in grammar, vocabulary, and discourse between Vietnamese and English lead to negative transfer errors in English speaking.	4.25	0.76
Vietnamese is frequently used in English lessons.	2.45	0.82
I often rely on literal translations from Vietnamese to English.	4.76	0.87
I lack exposure to an English language environment.	2.43	0.83
My English speaking performance is limited.	4.78	0.96

Note. N = 104

Many participants expressed that their proficiency in spoken English was restricted, with an average rating of 4.78 and a standard deviation of 0.96. Additionally, they acknowledged relying heavily on literal rendition from Vietnamese to English *(M=4.76, SD=0.87)*. Furthermore, the disparities in grammar, vocabulary, and discourse between Vietnamese and English were identified as contributing factors to negative transfer errors in English speaking *(M=4.25, SD=0.76)*. These findings are consistent with those of Lado (1975), who introduced the comparative analysis hypothesis. Grounded in behaviorism, this hypothesis proposed that the larger the differences between the native language and the target language, the more difficult the SLA process became. Due to its habitual nature, it proved challenging to overcome the influence of one's native language, particularly when it comes to negative transfer in language learning. This phenomenon underscored the importance of targeted language instruction and strategies aimed at mitigating the impact of native language interference in SLA.

Conversely, a smaller number of participants selected "Vietnamese is frequently used in English lessons", suggesting that at UD-UFLS, Vietnamese was less prevalent as a medium of lesson delivery *(M=2.45, SD=0.82)*. Similarly, participants rated the item "lacking exposure to an English language environment" very low, indicating that they had ample opportunities to be exposed to environments where English surrounded them *(M=2.43, SD=0.83)*. Despite their extensive exposure to English, many third-year EFL students struggled with overcoming negative transfer from Vietnamese to English in their speaking performance. It was the ingrained habitual thoughts that proved challenging to overcome. Some interviewees mentioned this during the interview:

"Even though I get to use English almost every day, I still find it hard to avoid negative transfer from Vietnamese to English. It's like trying to shake off a deeply ingrained habit." (I-10)

"I feel like just being exposed to English a lot doesn't necessarily mean I'm good at it. I also believe that Vietnamese transfer influences me a lot." (I-3)

As such, despite prolonged exposure to the English language, third-year EFL students still encountered difficulties in mitigating the influence of Vietnamese language patterns on their spoken English. The entrenched nature of Vietnamese linguistic habits presented a formidable obstacle for their linguistic adjustment. This challenge was compounded by disparities in grammar, vocabulary, and discourse between Vietnamese and English, as well as the proficiency level of the students in spoken English.

Third-Year EFL Students' Recommend Solutions

Table 4 *Third-Year EFL Students' Recommended Solutions*

Solutions	Frequency (=n)	Percentage (=%)
I take note of errors, adjust, and consistently practice correct English usage.	50	48.1
I review the distinctions between Vietnamese and English to prevent recurring errors.	24	23.1
I actively seek feedback from teachers or peers to identify and rectify language transfer errors.	35	33.7
I actively practice speaking English.	46	44.2
I make a conscious effort to think in English while speaking rather than relying on translations.	**80**	**76.9**

The predominant strategy selected by students to mitigate Vietnamese negative transfer in English speaking performance was the deliberate effort to engage in English thinking during speech, rather than resorting to translations. This approach, endorsed by 76.9% of participants, constituted a sustainable strategy, emanating from personal initiative to transition towards English-oriented cognition. Similarly, certain interviewees advocated for this solution:

"In addressing the difficulties associated with Vietnamese negative transfer in English speaking performance, I firmly believe that prioritizing English thinking is crucial. By actively striving to think in English, I can gradually diminish the influence of negative transfer from Vietnamese to English in my speaking." (I-6)

"In my opinion, a fundamental aspect lies in cultivating a habit of English thinking. By consciously training ourselves to think in English, I can gradually overcome the hurdles posed by negative transfer from Vietnamese to English in our speech. This approach requires dedication and persistence, but I believe it offers a sustainable solution to enhance our English speaking proficiency." (I-4)

Third-year EFL students also proposed several additional measures aimed at addressing errors, making adjustments, and consistently practicing correct English usage; actively engaging in spoken English practice; soliciting feedback from teachers or peers to identify and rectify language transfer errors; and reviewing the differences between Vietnamese and English to prevent recurring mistakes (at 48.1%, 44.2%, 33.7%, and 23.1% respectively). By incorporating these strategies, these EFL students might have effectively lowered the chances of L1 negative transfer into their L2 performance of speaking, thus enhancing their English proficiency.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has so far discussed the impact of negative transfer from Vietnamese (L1) into the speaking performance in English (L2) among third-year EFL students at UD-UFLS. *Discoursal errors* were found to be predominant, indicating a pressing need for targeted interventions. While participants acknowledged the adverse effects of negative transfer, only a minority could differentiate between types of transfer. Factors contributing to this included reliance on native language patterns and difficulties in adjusting linguistic habits. Recommended solutions included consciously engaging in English thinking during speech. Overall, the study highlighted the complexity of mitigating negative transfer and the importance of comprehensive language instruction for EFL students. There are thus certain implications for EFL teachers and students at UD-UFLS in particular, and for language teachers and students in general.

Priority on Discoursal Errors. Given the prevalence of discoursal errors experienced by EFL students at UD-UFLS, it is imperative for teachers to prioritize addressing these challenges in their instructional approach. This might entail dedicating significant attention to activities and materials that specifically target the enhancement of cohesion and coherence in English speaking (Derakhshan et al., 2016). By focusing on these areas, educators can effectively guide students in overcoming the most prominent obstacles they face in their oral communication.

Integrated Language Instruction. This might be beneficial in mitigating negative transfer errors across various linguistic levels. According to McCarthy and Carter (2014), teachers should emphasize the interconnectedness of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse in their teaching methods. By incorporating activities that encourage holistic language use, such as integrated skills tasks and communicative projects, educators can help students develop a more

comprehensive understanding of English language structures and functions, thereby reducing the occurrence of negative transfer errors.

Scaffolded Support and Guided Practice. Providing scaffolded support as well as guided practice opportunities is essential for assisting students in overcoming discoursal errors. Educators should offer structured tasks and feedback that progressively increase in complexity, allowing students to build their speaking skills incrementally within a supportive learning environment. By scaffolding the learning process and offering targeted guidance, teachers empower students to develop the necessary skills and confidence to effectively navigate discoursal challenges in their English speaking performance.

Heightened Awareness of Discoursal Errors. Students should cultivate a heightened awareness of discoursal errors and the potential for negative transfer from Vietnamese to English speaking. By acknowledging and understanding the specific areas where they struggle, students can actively engage in targeted practice and seek out resources to improve their discourse coherence and cohesion. This awareness empowers students to take ownership of their learning process and actively work towards enhancing their speaking performance.

Engage in Strategic Practice Activities. Engaging in strategic practice activities that directly target discoursal errors is essential for students' skill development. These activities may include participating in storytelling exercises, engaging in group discussions, or practicing oral presentations (Richards, 2008). By actively engaging in these activities, students have the opportunity to apply language skills in meaningful communicative contexts, refine their speaking abilities, and gradually reduce the impact of negative transfer errors on their speech production.

Embrace Reflective Learning Practices. Encouraging reflective learning practices can further support students in addressing discoursal errors and improving their English proficiency. Students should be encouraged to reflect on their speaking performance, identify areas for improvement, and actively seek out strategies and resources to enhance their discourse coherence and cohesion. By fostering a culture of reflection and self-assessment, students develop metacognitive skills that enable them to effectively monitor and adjust their language use, ultimately leading to greater proficiency in English speaking.

Conscious Thinking in English. Students should make a conscious effort to think in English while speaking, rather than relying on translations from Vietnamese (Nguyen et al., 2015). By internalizing English language structures and thought patterns, students can improve their fluency and accuracy in spoken English, minimizing the influence of negative transfer from mother tongue. This deliberate shift in thinking enhances language production and fosters greater confidence in English speaking performance.

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