CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the effects of Augmented Reality (AR) technology lessons on Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality. Students were involved in a classroom with AR-based learning materials for their courses to improve their speaking skills. This chapter introduces the background, the rationale, the significance, the purposes, the research questions of the study, and the definitions of key terms used in the following parts of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is becoming a global language that is widely used in many countries due to the trend towards globalization. The need for English language instruction is rising daily because of the world's ongoing development. English learners not only want to acquire the material to pass the examination but also want to improve their speaking skills to get employment or study abroad. Speaking is one of the four most important skills for communicating ideas as it enables real-time interaction, fosters immediate feedback, and enhances overall language fluency. Unlike reading and writing, which can be revised and refined over time, speaking requires spontaneous expression, making it a crucial skill for effective communication in personal, academic, and professional settings. Speaking is a way for people to communicate their thoughts and feelings. While lots of people can speak English, there are several issues when they wish to communicate, such as a lack of confidence, a limited vocabulary, and a lack of a practice environment (Nguyen, 2021). As the demand for English proficiency grows, so does the need for innovative and effective teaching methodologies that address these common challenges. The traditional classroom setting, while beneficial, often does not provide adequate engaging and immersive speaking practice. This gap has led to the exploration of alternative educational technologies that can supplement traditional methods by providing immersive, interactive experiences that mimic real-life interactions.

All dimensions of our lives, including education, have been significantly impacted by the rapid growth of technology. Integrating technological applications into education has significantly influenced teaching methods, learning environments, and instructional approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased technology adoption

in education (Holtgrewe et al., 2021; Huber et al., 2020; Steiner et al., 2020). Students today, who are tech savvy, are digital natives since they grew up in a digitally advanced society (Janschitz, G., & Penker, M., 2022). Their regular use of digital media and devices has become second nature to them as a result. Students now learn and receive information in a very different way since it is instantly available to them at any time and from any location. Additionally, students develop their personalities in the context of flexible communities, which require quick reactions and social interactions as well as a desire to be personally connected. Consequently, there have been notable shifts in both the educational requirements of students and their understanding of what makes for successful learning. Students want individualized, meaningful education that is centered on experiences to motivate them to participate and perform better. Additionally, students prefer to actively participate in their education rather than just see it from a distance.

ICT in education in general and EFL education have attracted a lot of interest and investment in policy and practice in the Vietnamese educational system (Peeraer & Van Petegem, 2012; Tri & Nguyen, 2014). The availability of facilities, technical assistance, school culture, and instructors' personal opinions among other factors that restrict the widespread use of ICT in teaching and learning (Le & Vo, 2014). Mobile technology applications in education are still " in its early stages " in Vietnam, particularly with mobile learning (Nguyen & Dang, 2012). Research reports in this field that are insightful are still in short supply. Mobile learning technology presents a clear distinction among the global rising technologies for education reform in the interim. It provides a variety of characteristics to "break the educational system wide open", a fresh strategy to engage digital natives, and the flexibility for individualized learning to occur (McQuiggan, Kosturko, McQuiggan, & Sabourin, 2015, p. 1 & 8). The capacity to study on the move, reach marginalized students and schools, enhance higher-order thinking abilities, and enable alternate learning environments are only a few of the primary standout advantages of mobile learning (McQuiggan et al., 2015, p. 10).

AR technology emerges as a promising tool in this regard. It offers a dynamic platform for language learning where learners can engage in simulated scenarios that require active use of spoken English. These scenarios can range from simple conversational exchanges to complex situational dialogues involving specific jargon and phrases pertinent to fields like tourism and hospitality, which are increasingly important in a globalized economy. Furthermore, the integration of AR in language learning can potentially transform the way learners interact with the language and with each other. By overlaying digital information in the real world, AR creates a blended

learning environment that can make learning more engaging and contextually relevant. This could particularly benefit undergraduate EFL learners in Vietnam, a country experiencing rapid tourism growth and increasing interaction with international visitors. Enhancing English speaking skills through AR not only aligns with global trends but also meets the specific needs of learners aiming to excel in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Additionally, it is more authentic, meaningful, and effective when learning prioritizes student inquiry, develops students' 21st-century abilities, tackles social issues, and uses information and communication technology. Modern technologies can therefore address these concerns by enabling deeper and more meaningful learning when they are at the forefront and utilized to the utmost extent in a student-centered way. Digital devices and emerging technologies are being quickly integrated into teaching and learning activities, replacing non-digital and ineffective teaching and learning materials, enhancing current educational processes, and presenting new educational techniques and approaches. Therefore, technology-enhanced learning should be utilized to deliver high-quality education and meet students' demands. However, it is important to focus on students' abilities, understanding, personality characteristics, hobbies, and preferences in addition to consistently inspiring, motivating, and involving them in the classroom.

The development of 21st-century skills, which may be broken down into intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competency domains and are essential to the learning process, can be improved by AR and gamification in the educational process. Because it is immersive, interactive, and engaging, AR may be used in a wide range of subjects at all educational levels, producing educational benefits and opening up new possibilities for learning. Gamification has a positive impact on education because it makes it easier to incorporate game mechanics and components into lessons and learning activities, which in turn gives students experiences that are more intriguing, inspiring, and engaging and may improve their academic achievement. The focus of the study, however, is mostly on the applications of AR in improving students' speaking skills. According to Carmigniani and Furht (2011), AR is "a real-time direct or indirect view of a physical real-world environment that has been enhanced and augmented by adding virtual computer-generated information to it". AR has demonstrated its potential to support language teaching and learning (Ramya & Madhumathi, 2017; Zhang, 2018). The obvious relationship between AR and current theories of second language acquisition emphasizes localized, contextual learning, and meaningful connections to the real world (Godwin-Jones, 2016).

Recent studies that investigated the use of AR in language instruction mostly concentrated on whether it might be utilized to increase vocabulary among English language learners. There are still many unanswered research questions, such as how AR could be seamlessly incorporated into the curriculum to improve students' learning performance and motivation; how AR may be applied to enhance speaking, listening, grammar, culture, and other fields of study; how students of varying ages and linguistic proficiency may utilize AR; and how AR could be applied with different teaching methods to make the learning process more effective. By intertwining these pedagogical frameworks, learners are exposed to real-life, contextually meaningful projects that necessitate effective communication in English. Through task sequences designed to challenge linguistic abilities progressively, students collaboratively engage in language-rich activities, fostering both communicative competence and intercultural awareness. Additionally, no study has been done on how to employ AR to enhance the speaking and listening skills of EFL students (Zhang, 2018). The pedagogical integration of AR in EFL instruction has seen a surge of scholarly interest in recent years, as researchers explore its potential to create immersive, context-rich environments for developing speaking skills. Wu, Jiang, and Chen (2024), in a comprehensive meta-analysis, affirmed that AR-enhanced instruction significantly improves oral communication outcomes, particularly fluency and lexical accuracy, due to its capacity to simulate authentic, multimodal interactions. Similarly, Fitayanti (2024) reported that AR-based modules designed for speaking tasks not only elevated Indonesian learners' oral performance but also increased their classroom engagement. Further highlighting the social dimension of learning, Yousefi, Salehi, and Fakhraee Faruji (2024) found that collaborative AR gaming substantially reduced learners' communication anxiety while promoting spoken interaction in EFL settings. Complementing these findings, Schorr et al. (2024) emphasized that immersive AR environments enhance learner motivation and active participation, thereby aligning instructional strategies with real-world communicative contexts. Additionally, Wang (2024) demonstrated that the presence of pedagogical agents in AR applications contributes to measurable gains in learners' fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Collectively, these recent studies underscore the relevance and promise of AR as a transformative tool for enhancing EFL speaking instruction through authentic, interactive, and emotionally supportive experiences.

In the context of globalization, English for Tourism and Hospitality assumes a pivotal role, acting as a bridge that connects diverse cultures and facilitates international commerce. Particularly in the tourism sector, proficiency in English is

indispensable, enabling professionals to communicate effectively with tourists from various linguistic backgrounds, manage services more efficiently, and promote cultural exchange. Globally, this has led to an increased demand for workers who are not only skilled in hospitality management but are also proficient in English, which enhances the travel experience for international tourists and fosters a more inclusive and accessible service environment. In Vietnam, the significance of English in the tourism and hospitality industry is particularly pronounced due to the country's burgeoning tourism sector. As one of the fastest-growing tourist destinations in Southeast Asia, Vietnam sees an ever-increasing influx of international visitors drawn to its rich cultural heritage and breathtaking landscapes. The ability to communicate in English thus becomes a crucial asset for local workers, enhancing interactions with tourists, expanding career opportunities, and contributing to the national economy. Developing English language skills specific to this sector is therefore not only an economic imperative but also a cultural one, as it plays a critical role in shaping the global perception of Vietnam as a welcoming and accessible destination. In 2023, Vietnam welcomed approximately 12.6 million international tourists, generating about 37.8 trillion VND (approximately 1.56 billion USD) in revenue (Vietnam News, 2024). Given that a significant portion of these visitors rely on English for communication, proficiency in the language among tourism professionals directly influences customer satisfaction, repeat visitation, and the country's overall competitiveness in the regional and global tourism market.

Developed by Davis (1989), TAM posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are critical determinants of individuals' acceptance and usage of new technologies. The integration of technology and Virtual Reality (VR) in education has attracted significant attention in recent research, particularly focusing on the readiness and willingness of both educators and learners to adopt these innovations. These studies provide valuable insights into the multifaceted factors influencing the acceptance and effective implementation of these technologies. Readiness to use technology and VR in educational settings encompasses several dimensions, including technical readiness, pedagogical readiness, and psychological readiness. Technical readiness refers to the availability and accessibility of necessary technological infrastructure, such as hardware, software, and internet connectivity. Research by Al-Azawei et al. (2016) highlights that the presence of reliable technological infrastructure is critical in facilitating the adoption of VR and other advanced technologies in education. Institutions that invest in up-to-date technology and provide adequate technical support are more likely to foster a higher level of readiness among educators

and students. First, pedagogical readiness refers to the extent to which educators are prepared to integrate technology into their teaching practices, which includes possessing the necessary skills and knowledge to design and implement technology-enhanced lessons. Studies by Gikas and Grant (2013) indicate that professional development and training are essential for fostering pedagogical readiness. Educators who receive comprehensive training in using VR and other technologies demonstrate increased confidence and competence in incorporating these tools into their curriculum, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience. Second, psychological readiness involves the attitudes and perceptions of educators and learners towards technology. Positive attitudes towards technology, coupled with a willingness to experiment and innovate, significantly contribute to psychological readiness. Davis et al. (1989) found that educators and students who perceive technology as beneficial and relevant to their learning objectives are more likely to embrace its use. Developing a positive technological culture within educational institutions is crucial for the successful integration of advanced tools like VR and AR. This integration requires readiness on multiple fronts: technical, pedagogical, and psychological. For instance, in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course, technical readiness involves ensuring that both students and educators have access to AR-compatible devices and reliable internet connectivity. Pedagogical readiness entails training instructors to effectively incorporate AR applications, such as Halo AR, into their teaching strategies to enhance language learning experiences. Psychological readiness is reflected in students' openness to engaging with new technologies, which can be fostered through collaborative activities and guided exploration. Studies have shown that such immersive technologies can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition and learner motivation in language education (Huang et al., 2021).

Willingness to adopt technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in educational settings is closely linked to three key factors: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and overall attitude toward technology. Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which individuals believe that using a particular technology are free of effort. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) demonstrated that when technologies are user-friendly and intuitive, both educators and students are more inclined to adopt them. In the context of AR, ensuring a simplified user interface and providing clear instructions can enhance this perception. For instance, a study by Barmaki et al. (2023) on AR tools for anatomy education found that user-friendly designs significantly improved students' learning experiences and engagement. Perceived usefulness is the extent to which individuals believe that a technology

would enhance their performance or learning outcomes. Research consistently shows that when educators and students recognize the tangible benefits of using VR - such as improved engagement, enhanced understanding of complex concepts, and increased motivation - they are more willing to incorporate it into their teaching and learning practices. Merchant et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis revealing that VR-based instruction significantly enhances student engagement and motivation by providing immersive and interactive learning experiences. Attitudes toward technology encompass individual beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions regarding the use of technology. Positive attitudes are crucial for the successful adoption of VR and AR in education. Teo (2009) suggests that factors such as prior positive experiences with technology, peer influence, and institutional support can shape these attitudes positively. Moreover, a supportive environment that encourages exploration and provides adequate resources can foster a more favorable disposition toward adopting new technologies. Incorporating preliminary findings related to AR's user-friendliness, a study by Barmaki et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of intuitive interface design in AR applications for education. Their research indicated that when AR tools are designed with user-friendly interfaces, students exhibit higher engagement levels and better learning outcomes. This underscores the necessity for developers and educators to prioritize ease of use in AR educational tools to facilitate their acceptance and effective integration into curricula.

This study employs the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the factors that influence students' adoption of AR technology in EFL instruction. In this research context, TAM was utilized to explore how Vietnamese EFL students perceive the utility and user-friendliness of AR applications, such as the Halo AR app, in enhancing their speaking skills for tourism and hospitality. By integrating TAM, the study examines the practical outcomes of AR-enhanced language learning and explores the psychological and perceptual dimensions that affect students' readiness and willingness to embrace such innovative educational tools. This theoretical underpinning provides the framework for the investigation, offering a comprehensive understanding of the technological acceptance process within the educational context. The current study aims to address the gap in the literature by investigating the viability of incorporating AR into activities designed with a recognized teaching method. Specifically, it describes how AR technology was integrated into classroom activities and investigates student perceptions of AR use in speaking practice. By presenting a strategy that combines AR technology with classroom activities to improve speaking skills, the study establishes a potential design

for this approach. Furthermore, it highlights the strengths and weaknesses perceived by students, thereby contributing valuable insights to the field of language education. The findings of this study could enhance our understanding of the effectiveness of AR in language learning and provide a basis for future research and application in EFL instruction. Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to both theory and practice by offering empirical evidence on the applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model in AR-enhanced language learning, proposing a pedagogical model that integrates AR into EFL speaking instruction, and informing educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers about the practical and perceptual factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of AR technologies in language education.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although technology is increasingly used in education, AR remains underutilized in enhancing EFL speaking skills, especially in vocational fields like tourism and hospitality. Vietnamese universities, though progressively incorporating digital tools, often lack a systematic approach to evaluating students' readiness and willingness to engage with emerging technologies. This gap is especially visible in EFL instruction, where traditional methodologies still dominate, and immersive tools like AR remain underutilized. Consequently, there is a need to explore whether Vietnamese EFL students are prepared to embrace AR and how this technology can be effectively integrated to enhance their speaking skills in alignment with future professional demands.

1.2.1 Traditional Teaching Limitations

The teaching and learning of English for Tourism and Hospitality at the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City continue to face challenges rooted in conventional pedagogical practices. Instruction in ETH courses still heavily relies on rote memorization and theoretical knowledge, often at the expense of communicative competence and practical application. This imbalance results in disengagement and limited perceived relevance of course content to real-world contexts. In a field as dynamic as tourism and hospitality, traditional methods fail to simulate the spontaneous and interactive nature of authentic communication, thereby impeding students' development of essential speaking and listening skills (Adamska, 2023). Moreover, speaking and listening practice is frequently overshadowed by an emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. As a result, students may succeed in written assessments but remain underprepared for oral communication tasks required in industry settings-such as giving guided tours, addressing international

guests, or responding to service inquiries (Pham & Malvetti, 2012). The lack of experiential learning further weakens students' confidence and real-world communicative competence.

1.2.2 Technology Integration Challenges

While UEH has begun incorporating digital tools into teaching, the systematic use of advanced educational technologies such as AR and VR is still lacking. Several barriers hinder their effective adoption. A primary challenge is resource limitation; the high cost of AR-capable devices and the lack of supporting infrastructure create substantial barriers to implementation, particularly in contexts where institutional budgets are constrained. Moreover, faculty members often lack adequate training to deploy these tools effectively in language instruction. Without structured professional development and institutional encouragement, educators tend to default to conventional pedagogies rather than experimenting with emerging technologies (Educators in VR, 2024). The difficulties extend to curriculum alignment, as teachers struggle to integrate immersive technologies into existing course frameworks while maintaining instructional coherence and outcome relevance (Lee, 2024). In addition, technical challenges-including insufficient technical support, low interoperability, and user accessibility-further complicate the sustainable use of AR/VR in education (Digital Defynd, 2025). As such, although AR offers considerable potential to create immersive and contextualized EFL speaking environments, its educational promise is often undermined by systemic, pedagogical, and infrastructural gaps. Furthermore, many educators lack the training needed to confidently implement these tools in pedagogically meaningful ways. Without professional development and institutional support, innovative tools like AR are often sidelined in favor of more familiar methods. Students are deprived of the immersive, contextualized learning environments that AR could provide (Merchant et al., 2014). This underutilization means that students are missing out on the benefits of immersive learning environments that can enhance both engagement and language acquisition. Faculty professional development remains inconsistent, with few opportunities to learn about new teaching methods or to explore the integration of emerging technologies. As Gikas and Grant (2013) note, teacher readiness is crucial for the successful implementation of mobile and immersive learning strategies. Without this foundational support, AR cannot fulfill its potential in enhancing EFL instruction.

1.2.3 Student Motivation

Student attitudes and motivation also significantly influence the success of English for Specific Purposes courses such as ETH. At UEH, some students may lack

intrinsic motivation to develop English speaking skills, particularly if they do not immediately perceive their relevance to future careers. This lack of motivation can result from minimal exposure to industry demands and an overemphasis on academic English rather than practical usage. Low motivation exacerbates the challenges presented by traditional methods and limited practice opportunities, making it difficult for students to stay engaged or actively participate in language learning tasks. As Teo (2009) highlights, students' prior experiences with technology, perceived relevance of content, and institutional encouragement play crucial roles in shaping positive attitudes and engagement. Recent research has underscored the importance of contextual alignment between course content and learners' career goals to sustain motivation in ESP environments. Pinzón (2024) emphasized that strategically designed content that mirrors workplace realities enhances learners' intrinsic motivation and participation. Likewise, Emilizar (2025) found that incorporating interactive activities such as role-plays and simulations significantly increased EFL learners' willingness to speak and engage during lessons. Beyond instructional design, learner autonomy also plays a pivotal role in sustaining motivation. Ni'mah, Nasihah, and Munfaati (2025) reported that EFL students who adopted self-regulated learning strategies demonstrated marked improvement in speaking confidence and classroom engagement. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2025) highlighted the motivational value of translanguaging strategies, especially when learners draw on their multilingual repertoires to navigate EFL tasks. These findings collectively suggest that effective motivational support in ESP contexts requires a multi-pronged approach that integrates authentic content, learner autonomy, and pedagogical interactivity.

1.2.4 Curriculum Alignment

Finally, the ETH curriculum at UEH may not sufficiently reflect the evolving needs of the tourism and hospitality sector. The industry increasingly demands professionals who are not only fluent in English but also capable of navigating intercultural communication and adapting to multilingual environments. However, without regular updates that align course content with current industry standards, the curriculum risks becoming outdated. Curricula must evolve to address the growing complexity of the global tourism landscape. Skills such as spontaneous speaking, guest interaction, and cultural adaptability are essential for career readiness but are not always adequately emphasized in existing syllabi. As Arkoudis et al. (2009) point out, successful curriculum design in ESP contexts must be closely tied to real-world industry expectations to remain relevant and effective. Recent studies emphasize the necessity of integrating intercultural communication competencies into ESP curricula

to prepare students for diverse professional environments (Mihele & Török, 2024). Incorporating digital literacy into ESP instruction has also been highlighted as essential for equipping students with the skills to navigate modern technological tools used in the industry (Chang, 2024). Furthermore, aligning curricula with global sustainability goals ensures that graduates are prepared to meet contemporary industry standards and expectations (Maguire et al., 2024). To address these evolving demands, institutions like UEH must adopt adaptive curricula that incorporate intercultural communication, digital literacy, and sustainability to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of their programs. Despite these challenges, few studies have systematically explored Vietnamese EFL students' readiness for AR-based learning in tourism-related contexts, highlighting a critical research gap.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study revolves around the potential of AR technology to enhance EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), specifically English for Tourism and Hospitality. English language proficiency is vital for students pursuing careers in the tourism and hospitality industry, as effective communication with diverse international visitors is crucial. Davies' (2000) research in the UK demonstrated the value of foreign language proficiency for those working in the tourism sector, highlighting the various tasks-such as answering the phone, giving destination guides, booking tickets and hotels online, arranging car rentals, and other duties-that require English for interpersonal communication (Al-Khatib, 2005). Most participants in past research indicated that English is essential to their employment (Chumphong & Embree, 2022; Husain et al., 2021; Widiastuti et al., 2021; Almomani et al., 2020). Speaking, listening, and vocabulary were consistently ranked among the most essential skills for workplace communication. Previous studies have shown that classes focused on various language skills can encourage students to speak English more actively (Al-Malki et al., 2022; Chumphong & Embree, 2022; Qaddumi et al., 2021; Amirbakzadeh et al., 2020; Rahayu, 2019; Khoirunnisa et al., 2018).

Pham and Malvetti (2012) found that role plays, group projects, and presentations significantly enhance students' productive speaking skills while also showcasing the value of internet resources in helping teachers access relevant subject matter information. Similarly, Ne'matulla et al.'s (2021) study on international construction workers revealed a comparable demand for English language proficiency. Pek et al. (2019) noted that English is a critical focus in the tourism industry, requiring skills in

speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The study by Arkoudis et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of English in tourism by describing its influence on both university students and the workplace, stressing the need for efficient learning and teaching methods to meet industry goals. Traditional teaching methods often fall short of providing engaging and authentic learning experiences (Adamska, 2023). By integrating AR technology into the design of learning materials, students can interact with virtual environments and objects related to the tourism and hospitality sector, fostering a more immersive and realistic language learning experience. In the local context of teaching ESP in Vietnam, students spend most of their time studying grammar, vocabulary, and reading text materials, while practicing speaking and listening relatively little in class. Hoa and Tuyet (2016) observed that teachers often offer lectures in both the students' original language and English, paying little attention to speaking and listening exercises, resulting in students being able to recall single words but unable to communicate their thoughts in English effectively. Unlike traditional instruction, which focuses heavily on grammar and vocabulary, AR can simulate authentic, spontaneous communication scenarios that mirror real-life tourism contexts.

Few studies have examined how AR can be seamlessly integrated into the curriculum to enhance both engagement and performance. There is also a dearth of research examining how AR can be effectively applied to various language skills, including speaking, listening, grammar, and cultural aspects. Additionally, existing studies fail to address the needs of diverse learner groups in terms of age and linguistic proficiency levels. The synergistic application of AR with pedagogical approaches remains underexplored, leaving room for inquiries into optimizing the learning process. Employing AR to enhance the speaking and listening skills of EFL students represents a substantial avenue for future research. This research gap underscores the necessity for comprehensive investigations that bridge these knowledge deficiencies and contribute to a more holistic understanding of the potential of AR technology in English language teaching. Unlike previous studies, this research specifically focuses on Vietnamese undergraduate students in a tourism and hospitality context, using an AR-supported project-based learning model to target speaking skills. The findings of this research contribute to the existing body of knowledge on innovative language teaching methodologies and provide practical insights for educators seeking to incorporate AR technology into their instructional practices for English language learners in the specific field of Tourism and Hospitality.

1.4 Research Purposes

To help the Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students at a university in Vietnam enhance their speaking skills in the field of English for Tourism and Hospitality, the purposes of this study were:

1) To investigate the acceptance levels of AR technology, in terms of readiness and willingness of Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students to enhance their speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality.

2) To investigate the effects of AR technology lessons on Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality.

3) To explore the Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of using AR technology lessons to enhance their speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality.

1.5 Research Questions

This study aims to shed light on the impact of integrating AR technology into the English for Tourism and Hospitality course. By investigating the research questions in the present study, this research seeks to contribute to the field of education by providing insights into the effects, students' perceptions, and best practices of using AR-based learning materials to improve speaking skills in the Tourism and Hospitality domain.

The following are the research questions for the present study:

1) What are the acceptance levels of AR technology, in terms of readiness and willingness, of Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students to enhance their speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality?

2) To what extent, do the AR technology lessons affect Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality?

3) What are the Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students' perceptions of using AR technology lessons to enhance their speaking skills in English for Tourism and Hospitality?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the application of AR technology to enhance EFL undergraduate students' speaking skills in the context of English for Tourism and Hospitality. With the growing importance of the tourism and hospitality industry in Vietnam, effective communication in English has become essential for students pursuing careers in this field. By integrating AR-based learning

material design into a course spanning nine weeks, this study aims to provide a novel and engaging approach to language acquisition, enabling students to develop their speaking skills in a realistic and immersive virtual environment. The findings of this research can contribute to the body of knowledge on technology-enhanced language learning and provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers seeking innovative methods to improve students' language proficiency and their ability to effectively interact with international tourists in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Moreover, this study contributes to the field of education by investigating the innovative use of AR technology to improve students' speaking skills within a nine-week framework. By combining established ELT principles with AR integration, the research creates an immersive and interactive environment that encourages meaningful communication experiences. The utilization of AR in designing learning materials offers a unique opportunity to simulate real-world scenarios, helping students to develop not only language proficiency but also practical knowledge aligned with their prospective roles in the tourism and hospitality industry. In doing so, this research aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by evaluating the effects and feasibility of AR-based instruction in authentic classroom settings.

Importantly, the integration of AR into English language teaching carries substantial benefits for learners with disabilities. AR provides dynamic, multisensory experiences that accommodate diverse learning needs. For instance, voice recognition features support pronunciation practice, while text-to-speech functions offer assistance for visually impaired learners. These features help remove barriers to language access by enabling learners with physical or cognitive challenges to engage more fully with content. Through customizable, multimodal input and output, AR fosters an inclusive environment in which students with disabilities can experience greater autonomy and active participation in language learning.

In addition to supporting learners with disabilities, AR has the potential to address socioeconomic disparities in language education. When deployed via mobile-friendly, low-cost platforms, AR technologies can help reduce the digital divide by offering accessible learning opportunities to underprivileged students. The interactive and gamified aspects of AR increase motivation and engagement, particularly among those who may lack prior exposure to innovative educational tools due to financial or infrastructural constraints. By making high-quality language learning experiences more widely available, AR contributes to equitable educational access and promotes the development of essential communication skills among marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged learners.

1.7 Definitions of the Key Terms

1.7.1 Vietnamese EFL Undergraduate Students

EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language. EFL students refer to individuals who are learning the English language in an environment where English is not the primary language spoken. These students typically reside in countries where English is not widely spoken or used as the main language of communication. In the case of the present study, Vietnamese EFL undergraduate students refer to learners at the tertiary level at a university in the South of Vietnam, who have limited exposure to English in their everyday lives and require formal instruction or dedicated language learning programs to develop their proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English.

1.7.2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a subset of English as a second or foreign language. It frequently refers to teaching English with a focus on the vocabulary for speaking and writing skills and abilities required by college students or those in the workforce. As with any language taught for specialized objectives, an ESP course focuses on a single industry or profession, such as Technical English, Scientific English, English for Medical Professionals, English for Nails Workers, English for Tourism, etc.

1.7.3 English for Tourism and Hospitality (ETH)

A specialized field within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Tourism and Hospitality focuses on the language needs of individuals working or aspiring to work in the tourism and hospitality industries. It encompasses the development of vocabulary, written and oral communication skills, and cultural understanding necessary for interacting effectively in tourism-related environments such as hotels, travel agencies, tour operations, restaurants, and customer service. Key components of ETH include language used for reservations, customer inquiries, tour guiding, negotiation with clients, hospitality management, and cultural sensitivity in a globalized context.

1.7.4 Speaking Skills

Speaking Skills refer to a learner's ability to effectively communicate and express ideas, thoughts, and emotions in the English language. These skills encompass pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, grammar accuracy, and the capacity to engage in meaningful conversations, discussions, and presentations with clarity and confidence.

1.7.5 Augmented Reality (AR)

AR is a technological advancement in which, with the use of an electronic device, such as a smartphone or laptop, digital information may be superimposed over a picture to produce an improved representation of reality. Users of AR interact with a real-world environment through computer-generated information that can include visual, audio, haptic, and olfactory components.

1.7.6 Augmented Reality (AR) Technology Lessons

AR Technology Lessons refer to educational sessions that integrate AR technology to enhance the learning experience. AR involves overlaying digital information-such as images, videos, and sounds-onto the real-world environment, typically viewed through devices like smartphones, tablets, or AR glasses. In the context of language education, AR technology lessons aim to create immersive, interactive experiences that facilitate language acquisition and improve specific language skills, such as speaking, through contextual and experiential learning.

1.7.7 Perception

Perception is the psychological process by which people interpret reactions into either positive or negative views based on the information gathered by their five senses. Selection, interpretation, and reaction phases are used to gather responses (Erin & Maharani, 2018). In this study, perception refers to the cognitive process by which individuals interpret and understand sensory information from their environment. It involves the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory input to form a coherent understanding of the world. In educational contexts, perception can specifically relate to how students interpret learning experiences, assess instructional methods, and form attitudes toward educational tools and resources, which can significantly influence their motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

1.7.8 Readiness

Readiness is defined as the degree to which those involved are individually and collectively primed, motivated and technically capable of executing the change as mentioned in this paper, which is a critical factor for successful implementation of system-wide change (Daniel et. al., 2013). In the context of educational research, readiness refers to the extent to which students possess the necessary skills, mindset, and preparatory knowledge to engage successfully in a particular activity or learning process. It is the degree of preparedness and receptiveness to begin learning, adapt to new teaching strategies, or use novel educational tools effectively.

1.7.9 Willingness

Willingness indicates a student's openness, motivation, and intent to participate in a specific learning activity or use new instructional methods or technologies. It refers to the extent to which an individual or group has the confidence, commitment, and motivation to accomplish a specific task (Gyftodimos & Papadimitriou, 2018). It reflects a positive attitude and voluntary commitment to engage in learning processes or explore unfamiliar pedagogical approaches, such as AR-based activities in the classroom.

In summary, the background of the study is covered in this chapter. The study's purpose was to investigate the effects of AR technology on the speaking abilities of EFL students in response to current issues. Specific research questions were outlined following the research objectives. Also highlighted was the study's significance. The following chapter provides a review of and associated research on EFL Speaking skills, ESP, ETH, and AR technology, as well as related learning theories and conceptual frameworks for the study.