Difficulties of EFL teachers in teaching speaking skills:

A case study at Trinh Hoai Duc Primary School

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Abstract

English is a globally prevalent language, and the ability to speak English is a crucial skill for expressing thoughts, explaining, and debating in everyday situations. Hence, it is crucial to ascertain the challenges that teachers encounter while instructing English speaking abilities. The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by teachers at Trinh Hoai Duc Primary School (THĐPS) in teaching English speaking skills, as well as to propose solutions to these challenges. A study that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies is carried out. The subjects of the study included 28 English teachers. Teachers filled out questionnaires and participated in interviews to collect data for the study. The result reveals that the dominant difficulties teachers commonly encounter are related to the limitation of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, personal psychology, large and multi-level classes, the current testing system, and a lack of class time presented additional challenges for teachers in teaching English speaking skills. The findings of this study are very applicable to the process of teaching English-speaking skills at Trinh Hoai Duc Primary School. They give teachers a comprehensive picture of the teaching process in order to meet the level of expectations.

Keywords: English speaking skills; challenges; Trinh Hoai Duc Primary School

1. Introduction

Globalization has connected people worldwide in all domains of contemporary life these days. Due to globalization, it is necessary to improve communication among countries to strengthen these interconnections. In order to take the role as a language of international communication, a pervasive language will grow dominant over other languages and reach global status. English has presumably gained this rank due to its rapid globalization. The leading language in technology, business, science, diplomacy, and entertainment is English. It is also the most widely used language in scientific research and the medium of education in many universities and colleges across the world.

The majority of nations promote the use of English in instructions and teaching methods, which highlights the language's significance in educational settings. Vietnam is not an exception in this regard, as English is taught as a foreign language from elementary school through university, and it is also a required subject. These days, a lot of schools and universities teach a lot of material in English and demand that graduates achieve output standards in the

language. Additionally, having a working knowledge of English makes it easier for learners to seek graduate-level and postgraduate degrees.

For most foreign language learners, achieving speaking fluency is the most important skill. This can be easily explained by the fact that oral communication in a language is significantly more common than written communication, and speaking is an essential requirement for learning to read and write. Therefore, speaking is the skill that learners will be evaluated on the most in real-life situations. It is a crucial component of daily communication, and most people form their opinions about someone's ability based on their initial ability to speak clearly and concisely. Furthermore, the importance of speech is demonstrated by its interaction with other abilities. For instance, speaking aids in the development of vocabulary and grammar, which in turn enhances writing proficiency. Put simply, someone who speaks English effectively will soon discover that learning the language is not too difficult.

Teaching primary school learners speaking skills has a significant impact on their ability to acquire speaking skills. Teaching speaking is the most important aspect of learning English, and success is determined by the ability to carry on a conversation in the language. Speaking has been neglected in schools and universities for various reasons, including an emphasis on grammar and unfavorable teacher-learner ratios. Vietnam's traditional method of education heavily relies on books and lectures. Both teachers and learners pay close attention to grammatical elements. Consequently, these learners may have structural competence but lack communicative competence. This is the major issue facing many Vietnamese schools. They do not provide sufficient opportunities to speak in natural settings. In interviews with foreigners, speaking skills are the most important factor. The purpose of this research is to help teachers who teach speaking English in elementary schools be more successful in their teaching activities.

Although being able to communicate in English is essential for coexisting in a modern global setting, Vietnamese people do not speak English as their first language. For many individuals, English is a foreign language, and spoken communication might be challenging. Many learners remark that despite years of study, they are still unable to speak English clearly and concisely (Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren, 2006). For instance, while answering questions, sharing ideas, or expressing sentiments, learners must prepare and think through their answers in advance. As a result, it appears that speakers find it challenging to communicate and speak without a sufficient vocabulary and knowledge of grammar rules.

In today's context, English speaking skills are considered one of the crucial factors in the teaching and learning process for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in many universities and high schools worldwide. Within the elementary school educational environment, English speaking skills have become an indispensable component of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. However, EFL teachers often encounter numerous challenges when instructing English speaking skills to elementary school learners. These challenges may encompass a lack of practical experience in teaching English speaking skills, the application of teaching methods suitable to learners' proficiency levels, the establishment of an engaging and positive learning atmosphere, and the resolution of common errors made by learners. To enhance the quality of teaching and learning English speaking skills for elementary school learners, it is imperative to research and comprehend the challenges

commonly faced by EFL teachers in this process, thereby proposing appropriate and effective solutions.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the paper aims are conducted for the purposes of identifying difficulties teachers perceive in teaching speaking ability; and suggesting for teacher-perceived solutions to the challenges of teaching English proficiency in speaking at Trinh Hoai Duc primary school. These purposes then serve to fulfill the broader and more general objective which is to improve the teaching English speaking skills.

2. Methodology

In accordance with the purposes of the study, the study has been specifically designed to look for answers to the following guiding questions:

1) What challenges or difficulties do teachers face when teaching speaking skills in the classroom at Trinh Hoai Duc Primary School?

2) How can EFL instructors mitigate these challenges?

To find out the answers to the research questions, the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are combined in this study. To begin, questionnaires were used to obtain numerical data. Then interviews were employed to obtain qualitative data. By doing that, the researcher can get reliable participants' information to answer the questions of the research.

The Microsoft Excel 2013 program was used to help synthesize and analyze the data for this investigation. Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet tool that is a part of the Office product group, which consists of business applications. It gives users the ability to calculate, format, and arrange data on a spreadsheet. Furthermore, it can perform statistical operations on data or generate a variety of graphs. First and foremost, the tool's popularity is the reason the researcher selected it for the study's data analysis. Pre-installed on the majority of computers these days is the Excel application. Second, compared to other specialized statistical applications, entering data into Excel for statistical analysis is simpler. Ultimately, Excel now offers a wide range of sophisticated statistical analysis tools to meet all the needs of this study, from simple to sophisticated.

Data for this research were collected through questionnaires, and interviews. A questionnaire was the first method used in this study to gather data. It is described as a tool for gathering data in which a set of questions is given to respondents in order to learn more about their beliefs, experiences, and opinions. In the present study, the questionnaire was employed due to its benefits, specifically: (1) it takes less time to gather data from a large number of respondents; (2) responses are free from bias as respondents are not impacted by each other's answers; and (3) questionnaires are the most effective means of obtaining responses from individuals who are reluctant to disclose their identity. The respondent can freely share his opinions and thoughts without worrying about looking foolish in front of others.

Teachers are the survey's subjects. The questionnaire's content, which was thoroughly created through prior research and a theoretical foundation, was centered on the participants' challenges when teaching speaking English. Multiple-choice questions were used to create each item. There were two subsections on this questionnaire. An overview of the structure of the questionnaire is given.

If the researcher uses just one technique to gather data, the results could be erroneous. Thus, the respondent was interviewed by the researcher. Teachers participated in semi-structured interviews for this study. The researcher also conducted interviews with five English teachers with several years of expertise. To find out what obstacles teachers face when teaching profoundly in English, the researcher created open-ended interview questions based on research objectives, which the teachers then double-checked. The researcher's prepared questions were completely answered by the participants. With their consent, an audio recorder captured all of their comments and viewpoints.

The researcher categorizes, counts, computes, and displays the majority of qualitative data as tables or figures for discussion and description. Following analysis, the findings will be analyzed and presented in relation to the goals of the study. The researcher would listen to the audio and transcribe every word said by the interviewee in order to analyze the qualitative data that was collected throughout the conversation. Interview transcripts were arranged in accordance with the study's goals after all the data had been transcribed. Additionally, the researcher found and categorized relevant concepts. The results of the interview will be given narratively.

3. Findings

This is the primary section of the survey, which consists of 29 questions meant to learn more about the challenges THĐPS teachers have when teaching speaking English. *"Please rate your level of agreement with each following statement that describes your difficulty in teaching speaking English."* is the primary question that teachers must answer in this section.

Teachers' opinions in the questionnaire

The teachers' knowledge of topics for teaching speaking skills: 29% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed that their knowledge of speaking topics is limited, indicating that they believe they have sufficient knowledge for their speaking lessons. With the plethora of resources available today—books, the Internet, etc. — teachers can easily search for and update information regarding speaking topics. Since then, it has been simple to provide their learners with additional vocabulary and material. 29% of teachers had a neutral stance on this statement. Probably because these educators deemed the textbook to be an adequate source of information for learners. They only concentrate on the available content and make no effort to expand the topics. The remaining 43% of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that their speaking knowledge was limited. The researcher discovered that these are the views of young teachers (with under 3-year experience). They lack the knowledge and teaching experience necessary to guide and inspire students.

The teachers' methods of instruction for teaching speaking skills: 7% of teachers strongly disagreed and 75% disagreed that their teaching method was passive, uncreative, and uninteresting, indicating that their method of teaching speaking is active, productive, and increases learners' interest. Only 18 % of teachers admitted to using passive methods. When the result sheet for this assertion was examined, the researcher

discovered that the ratio of passive teachers was comprised of older teachers. Even though they have extensive teaching experience, they continue to employ ineffective and uninteresting traditional methods.

The teachers' feedback for learners: 93% of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that there was insufficient time to provide learners with feedback during the time of teaching speaking. After a speaking task has been completed, teachers are required to provide feedback and correct errors. However, because there are too many learners in a class and teachers do not have enough time, they cannot provide feedback and corrections for each learner. In this case, they only correct learners' errors and mistakes as examples and illustrations for the whole class due to the time limit.

The teachers' instructions for speaking activities: There were 68% of teachers who disagreed or strongly disagreed that they gave instructions for speaking activities only in Vietnamese. This indicates that they direct the activities in English in order to create an environment where learners can communicate in English and become more familiar with English. To ensure that learners can comprehend the activity's requirements, teachers must be flexible with the language of instructions when working with learners whose English proficiency is still developing. In this situation, one of the solutions for teachers is to instruct the learners in English before switching to Vietnamese.

The teachers' techniques for teaching speaking skills: Up to 93% of teachers employ some techniques when developing learners' speaking skills. When teachers use the traditional teaching method, learners are not learning centers. If teachers simply display images on the screen without organizing the activity, learners will become passive and unable to communicate effectively. To comply with the learner-centered education philosophy, teachers must adopt more active, engaging, and learner-centered instructional strategies.

The teachers' instructions on grammar, vocabulary, and reading – writing tests: 89% of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that vocabulary, grammar, and reading-writing tests should be emphasized. Grammar and vocabulary are the most fundamental and essential aspects of learning English. Learners will not be able to communicate fluently if they only engage in academic study without practice. There are no opportunities for learners to practice listening, speaking, and discussion. The interactive activities in class are insufficient to provide learners with benefits such as communication and English presentation skills.

The teachers' opinion on the learners' vocabulary: The majority of participants think that their learners' vocabulary, which is actively employed in speaking and writing, is limited. 60% of teachers who said that they "strongly agree." Teachers who agreed with this statement were a significant portion of the sample, including 18% of the respondents. At 11%, the percentage of those who hold opposing and neutral opinions is negligible. This finding indicates that the majority of teachers believed that learners'

inability to express themselves adequately and effectively was primarily due to a lack of vocabulary. One possible explanation is that the learners may not have practiced and retained the vocabulary. When learners learned new vocabulary, they were able to retain them and utilize them in conversation. But without frequent speaking practice, most words eventually slip from their memory. In addition, a lack of vocabulary and low proficiency dominate their classroom discourse. Learners' vocabulary is so limited that they do not know what to say in class, which causes them anxiety and negative emotions. Therefore, learners rarely speak English and usually maintain silence. Gradually, they will lose interest in speaking and become discouraged from continuing to speak English.

The teachers' opinion on the learners' using the words: Overall, though at a lesser incidence than the issue of vocabulary lack, the majority of teachers reported that speaking correctly was made more difficult by the use of wrong terms. Of the participants, 49% said they "agreed," while 36% said they "strongly agreed." Of them, 11% adopted a neutral stance, and 4% had no trouble deciding what to say. As a result, having sufficient vocabulary—that is, essential words for communication—to convey ideas is more crucial for teachers than ensuring that they use them correctly. This explains why some teachers thought that using the wrong word forms, articles, or prepositions infrequently did not confuse the listener too much.

The teachers' opinion on the learners' using the tenses: The learners' difficulties with tenses when speaking English. Verb tenses are changes that aid in expressing time—that is, the moment at which an action occurs. The pie figure illustrates that almost 50% of teachers concur that learners struggled greatly with tenses in communication. Specifically, 21% of teachers reported that it is exceedingly challenging to retain all English grammar rules pertaining to tenses. Of them, 47% held a neutral view, and 11% disagreed. Verb tenses are a common area of error for EFL learners. Indeed, learners frequently hesitate when speaking in English because they need to take a moment to consider how to use tenses correctly. That is to say, a major speaking challenge for learners was the variety of tenses used in English, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively.

The learners mispronounce words: For EFL learners, mispronouncing words is a relatively prevalent issue. Many learners are reluctant to talk because they are uncomfortable pronouncing words correctly. They believed that because English pronunciation and spelling differ, it was challenging to pronounce some terms. Occasionally, they mispronounced words, which made it difficult to convey the meaning clearly. Nearly half of the teachers at THĐPS answered that learners' pronunciation errors pose a serious challenge when speaking English. The remainder is neutral, which accounts for 25% of the total. Nobody thinks pronouncing words correctly is easy. The majority of teachers felt that the other language-related difficulties, which include "giving wrong word stresses," "giving wrong intonation patterns," "using wrong sentence structures," and "lack of connected speech," are not as challenging as the first five. A sizable portion of teachers selected "neutral" in response to these inquiries. No "strongly disagree" replies, nevertheless, were noted. This result suggests that from the perspective of

THĐPS teachers, sentence patterns, word stresses, intonation, and connected speech are not major barriers to speaking English.

The learners think in Vietnamese and then translate it into English: Many learners think in Vietnamese before translating into English when communicating. This causes speakers to pause frequently during speeches since they have to think over their points thoroughly before speaking. This conduct is more common among learners, maybe as a result of their inadequate prior speech instruction. The result shows that 43% of THĐPS teachers affirmed having the behavior. 18% said they were neutral, while 39% said they agreed. Nobody expressed a "strong disagreement."

The learners feel nervous when speaking: According to the results regarding the psychological component of anxiety, the majority of respondents (32% and 39%, respectively) believe that anxiety is one of the primary obstacles to speaking English fluently. Teachers believe that learners' anxiousness prevents them from speaking English fluently. Thus, in order to assist learners in overcoming this impediment, greater attention should be paid to their involvement in oral English activities. However, 25% of the respondents denied that learners experience anxiety in the classroom. Their anxiousness causes them to lose their train of thought or forget what to say. The results of this poll confirm the above theory. In summary, it can be stated that learners' speaking performances are significantly impacted by their anxiety.

The learners fear of making mistakes: Learners frequently struggle with the fear of making mistakes, particularly in an EFL setting like Vietnam. According to the survey results, 47% of THĐPS teachers concurred that learners experience anxiety when they make mistakes. The main cause of learners' anxiety about making mistakes is their worry about other people's opinions of them and their dread of looking silly in front of them. They fear that if they make a mistake when speaking English, their peers will criticize them, and their friends will laugh at them.

The learners fear of losing face: Speaking in public in a foreign language can be quite intimidating. EFL learners may experience a sense of failure when they make mistakes. In fact, according to 42% of study participants, learners' greatest fear while speaking in English is seeming foolish. The learners took great care to avoid looking foolish when they spoke as a result. It was evident that the reason learners were unable to speak English well was due to their sensitivity to the fear of looking foolish. It is rather common for non-native English speakers to make blunders when speaking the language. According to the survey, 29% of respondents were ambivalent about the dread of looking foolish, 11% strongly disagreed, and 18% disagreed.

The teachers' opinion on classroom's facilities: 82% of teachers agreed that a lack of facilities (projector and screen to display images, videos or electronic documents, headphones with a microphone, speakers, and recording tools to support language acquisition…) is one of the challenges of teaching English speaking ability. If classrooms are equipped with internet, projectors, etc., learners will have the opportunity

to learn vocabulary with vivid images and watch videos about conversations. In addition, the Internet offers a variety of entertaining games and activities to engage learners.

The teachers' opinion on the class size (over 20 learners): According to the results of the survey, 63% of teachers found it difficult to instruct speaking in large classes. There are between 45 and 53 learners in each classroom. It is challenging for teachers to organize and manage classroom activities. When a teacher assigns pair or group work, there is insufficient time to guide or correct all learners' errors.

The teachers' opinion on the textbook's material: The compilation of the textbook is based on expert research and writing, and the content is designed to be appropriate for all levels of learners. Therefore, the majority of this statement's opinions received neutral responses from the teachers (68%). 11% of teachers believed that the content of the textbook was not difficult for learners, while 21% of teachers believed that the content was difficult for learners.

The teachers' opinion on the curriculum teaching duration: Up to 97 % of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that there was insufficient time for the acquisition of extensive knowledge. Speaking is a challenging skill. To master this skill, learners must not only have a large vocabulary, but also extensive knowledge in a variety of fields. However, there are only 45 minutes per class; teachers frequently devote too much time to teaching vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing, leaving no time for practicing English communication.

The teachers' opinion on the learners' level in the same class: 75% of teachers admitted to having multi-level learners in their classes. There are learners who are proficient in the use of language, but there are also many who are unable to construct and speak complete sentences. Lessons and practical activities for learners are extremely challenging for teachers to design.

The teachers' opinion on time for learners to practice: 89% of teachers reported having insufficient time for learners to practice their speaking skills. To help learners have effective speaking lessons, teachers must take numerous steps. They should provide learners with new vocabulary and structures, assist them in remembering them, and then allow them to practice. However, a single class only lasts 45 minutes, which is insufficient time for all learners to practice and for each learner to perform. In addition, teachers lack time to listen, evaluate, and correct learner errors.

The teachers' opinion on evaluating the competence of the learners: Speaking skills instruction and evaluation are ineffective. The format of the speaking examination was not solely based on communication. In reality, the examinations remained grammar-based. 75% of teachers agreed that the absence of a speaking test was one of the reasons why teaching and learning speaking skills was difficult. In their opinions, the mini tests, mid -course tests and the final tests at school only focus on mainly vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing. In conclusion, there is hardly any

assessment of communication skills, so teachers do not give learners sufficient time to practice speaking and pay little attention to their speaking.

Teachers' survey interview

An interview was conducted to collect additional information and clarify the survey questionnaire and the results of the interviews about difficulties in speaking English faced by teachers such as:

1. *English is spoken approximately fifty percent of the time in the classroom. The teachers attempt to instruct learners to perform speaking tasks in all essential aspects (grammar, vocabulary, phrases, etc.) in English, but the teachers must also speak Vietnamese because learners cannot fully comprehend English. For instance, teachers may explain the phrases learners must use to express their opinions. I concur..., vehemently disagree..., vehemently oppose... the teachers attempt to help learners interact with English more effectively, but the teachers must ensure that all learners know precisely what to do. In some instances, the teachers must therefore explain in Vietnamese.*

2. *Teachers do not have sufficient time for all learners in a speaking class; teachers simply cannot guide all learners carefully so that they fully comprehend what to do. The average class size for a speaking class ranges between 30 and 45 learners, and the duration is 45 minutes. Learners who gain access to a new topic require time to acclimate and understand their responsibilities. In this case, they have significant difficulties with vocabulary, structure, and grammar... Therefore, teachers need a great deal of time to assist them. Thus, in many instances, the class is nearing completion just as learners determine what they will say. Otherwise, teachers can only guide some learners and then force them to complete assignments within the required time frame, which is ineffective. The distinction between learners levels is an additional issue. Learners with a strong command of the English language desire to speak as much as possible, whereas those with a poor command of the language lack confidence and do not wish to speak. Being divided into groups, each group's task is completed by only one or two proficient speakers; as a result, speaking skills are not improved for all learners; the strong become stronger while the weak become weaker.*

3. *The speaking section of the textbook provides learners with engaging speaking topics that stimulate their use of vocabulary, grammar, and structure. However, there are also some design issues with this section. Firstly, this section of the textbook is quite brief and easy to skip, suggesting that it is not particularly important. This results in the belief that there is nothing with which to associate this group of learners, making it more difficult to attract their attention when conducting speaking tasks. Second, the topic in the speaking section is engaging, requiring social knowledge to speak, whereas the learner's vocabulary is*

limited, which is an obstacle. In fact, the textbook provides learners with the necessary structure, but it is preferable to have humorous pictures of needed vocabulary for speaking, which both pique learners' interest and help them speak better.

4. *The learners face numerous obstacles when learning English. However, I believe there are two major problems. To begin with, their English foundation is not well prepared. Many of them have a **restricted vocabulary** and **can't pronounce words correctly**. The second reason is that they are afraid of making a mistake while speaking English. Therefore, a huge responsibility lies on the teachers' shoulders to encourage the learners to speak as much as possible.*

5. *"Their pronunciation is quite bad. Many learners speak English in a Vietnamese accent. For example, the suffixes /-s/ and /-z/ do not exist in Vietnamese, so most learners ignore them. Certain individuals are also influenced by the local accent, such as the mispronunciation of /l/ and /n/, /iz/, /-pl-/, /-spr-/ sounds."*

4. Discussions

Based on the analysis of questionnaires submitted by teachers at THĐPS, it is evident that both teachers and learners are acutely aware of the significance of speaking skills. However, the results are not satisfactory. Because they encountered numerous obstacles.

3.1. Difficulties from the learners

Low English proficiency is one of the primary factors preventing learners from participating in English-speaking activities. The learners lack the vocabulary and sentence structures necessary to express their ideas so that others can comprehend them. In addition, the learners' poor pronunciation, stress, and intonation cause them to feel nervous. Due to their incorrect pronunciation, they are unable to communicate with others. All of the aforementioned factors inhibit their willingness to speak. Therefore, they rarely speak English and must maintain silence. They would gradually lose interest in speaking and become disheartened about continuing to speak English.

3.2. Difficulties from the teachers

Some of the teachers lacked sufficient English-speaking confidence. They have great difficulty teaching English due to their limited knowledge of speaking topics. Many teachers admitted that their communicative abilities, particularly their speaking and listening abilities, had diminished since graduation. The reasons are readily apparent. Perhaps, the teachers themselves also apply the traditional teaching method, such as grammar translation, and are still accustomed to it. In addition, both teachers and learners lack a language environment in which to develop their communicative skills, preventing them from communicating effectively in English. When teaching and learning English, teachers and learners previously spoke Vietnamese, their native tongue. If teachers did not explain nearly everything in Vietnamese,

their learners would not comprehend. Due to their limited proficiency in English, the learners spoke Vietnamese. Working in a predominantly Vietnamese environment has diminished the teachers' speaking and listening skills to the point where they sometimes have trouble expressing themselves in the target language.

The effectiveness of speaking lessons is highly dependent on how teachers instruct their learners. Learners argued that the most significant factor preventing learners from participating in speaking activities was teachers' monotonous teaching methods. Aside from that, proper teaching behavior in the classroom also requires attention, as negative behaviors are typically effective for learners and leave them with difficult-to-overcome negative feelings toward English.

3.3. Problems from other factors

Large class sizes are viewed as an additional factor that affects the teaching of English-speaking skills. The average class size at THĐPS was 45 learners, and learners only had three English classes per week, making communicative practices nearly impossible. In such a large class, teachers faced many challenges. First and foremost, discipline was a matter of concern. When learners were noisy, inattentive, poorly behaved, or simply out of control (e.g., fighting in class, teasing each other, etc.), teachers had difficulty teaching. This violation of the class rules took the teachers considerable time to resolve and halted the lesson. In addition, the levels of THĐPS learners vary. Although large and multi-level classes have their benefits, such as providing a larger pool of human resources and enhancing the educational value of real contact between different types of people, they pose significant difficulties for teachers. In these classes, it is extremely difficult for teachers to organize activities, maintain order, and monitor each learner. A good learner of English proficiency does not want to work with a weak learner in activities that require pairing. If necessary, they will soon become bored. Only good and talkative learners take advantage of the opportunity to raise their voices in such classes. Similarly, there is insufficient treatment, compassion, and support for timid and less capable learners.

Current examinations continue to emphasize grammar, writing, and reading comprehension. Consequently, teachers naturally emphasize teaching these aspects. The teachers may be correct in this instance, as they have acted to satisfy the learners' desires. The majority of learners are only interested in achieving high test scores or passing entrance exams. The current test system does not encourage learners to practice English communicatively, as they are always required to take tests in written form, and there is no need to practice to become communicative. Learners are most motivated to learn English to pass exams. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the English learning motivation of learners. And updating the testing system is a highly effective solution.

The teachers were also limited to only three 45-minute periods per week with their learners. Many teachers have complained that a 45-minute lesson is insufficient for learners to discuss textbook topics in depth after receiving instructions. During that time, they had to assist the learners in completing the new lesson, review previously taught material, and prepare for written exams. The lack of classroom time not only necessitates additional effort and time from teachers but also results in a methodological issue: the majority of THĐPS teachers implement the grammar-translation approach. In such a short period of class time, it is not permissible to

allow learners to speak more and to ask them more referential questions; otherwise, teaching material will not be covered, whereas more teacher talk would save more time. Typically, teachers are overburdened and unwilling to do that.

3.4. Some suggestions for improvement

From the teachers' perspective, some workable solutions mentioned are as follows:

For learners, it is important to build an effective and appropriate learning method to speak English. The most effective way to learn to speak is to practice constantly, so they should practice speaking English outside of class more frequently. When speaking English with friends, learners should practice thinking in English. Avoiding worrying about making mistakes when speaking will help communication run more smoothly.

For teachers, they should provide clear instructions and sufficient assistance for their learners to build an effective way of learning English. In class, they should help learners get over their inhibitions and nervousness by acting friendly and cooperative, making their learners feel comfortable when they speak. Besides, teachers should provide their learners with more opportunities to speak English in class by engaging them in a variety of activities that demand them to speak. Teachers also should know when and how to correct learners' mistakes so that the learners do not become afraid of making mistakes so that the conversation is not interrupted. Encouraging learners to switch speaking partners is also an excellent strategy for training learners' listening and speaking reflexes.

For the school, teachers suggest that there should be a reasonable limit on the number of learners in a class to ensure that they can adequately care for all learners. Facilities and modern equipment should be improved to give learners a sense of comfort and enthusiasm when they come to class.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to identify difficulties in teaching English speaking skills encountered by teachers at THĐPS. In general, through qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the study shows that teachers faced a significant number of difficulties teaching English, which could be due to a variety of factors. According to theories, various factors influence speaking performance. Low levels of English proficiency (such as insufficient vocabulary, mispronouncing words, the habit of thinking in Vietnamese and then translating into English, using wrong words, using wrong tenses), inadequate teaching methods from teachers, and problems with the use of the mother tongue were found to be the root causes of learners' difficulties in learning English speaking skills. Inadequate communicative competence and improper methods were the second issues teachers encountered when instructing English speakers. In addition, large and multi-level classes, the current testing system, and a lack of class time were cited by teachers as obstacles to learning and teaching English-speaking skills.

These findings resulted in recommendations that may be beneficial to both teachers and learners in learning and teaching speaking English.

For teachers, teachers have a crucial role in helping their learners become more proficient communicators. Therefore, it is essential to give teachers instructions on how to help their

learners improve their speaking skills. Finding a balance between teaching speaking and other language skills at the same time is crucial. More opportunities for learners to study and speak English will inevitably result in an improvement in their language skills. In order to motivate learners to complete the learning assignments at school, teachers also need to stay up-to-date on cutting-edge teaching techniques. To ensure that learners have fun while learning the English language, teachers should be able to make the teaching and learning process engaging rather than boring. Teachers should look into ways to improve the effectiveness of some communicative exercises, including debate, role-playing, impromptu dialogue, drills, information gaps, and games. Speaking assignments can be arranged by teachers according to their increasing complexity. For example, they can start by explaining images or objects in the classroom. Learners will gradually build confidence in their capacity to communicate in English through basic activities, which will enable them to take on increasingly challenging tasks (debates, presentations, etc.) without feeling beyond their current level of proficiency. When planning and arranging English-speaking exercises for classes with a large number of learners, teachers face challenges and roadblocks. On the other hand, if teachers place a strong emphasis on communication while also taking the time to get to know their learners' needs, interests, and characteristics, they may completely design speaking activities that satisfy the needs of the learners and achieve the learning goals. Throughout the pre-speaking phase, teachers should provide crucial new words and information to learners who are deficient in vocabulary and grammar structures. This can be achieved through the use of exercises that include new vocabulary and grammatical structures, the use of visual aids relating to the topics, and the presentation of questions to further explore the topics. Promoting an English-speaking atmosphere in the classroom is the responsibility of the teachers. All instruction in English should take place in English. As a result, students can increase their vocabulary and listening comprehension skills while also learning to react in English naturally. They ought to offer a cozy classroom setting to lessen learners' nervousness. Teachers should aspire to be an endless supply of knowledge for their learners, which means they should regularly offer helpful strategies or resources to support learning both at school and at home. In order to guarantee that learners continue to study and that teachers can make assessments as engaging as possible, teachers must also provide information and methods for assessment. To help learners become more confident in their ability to speak English, teachers should know when and how to correct their mistakes so that they do not fear making them. However, the error correction phase should be deferred until the end of the task, and praise learners' work regardless of quality. In order to engage their learners in the speaking activity, teachers have to employ the most effective teaching strategies, develop their learners' confidence, and be aware of their interests and feelings. Teachers ought to commend learners for their proficiency in speaking English. They should build strong relationships with their learners, instill joy in the classroom, and inspire them to be enthusiastic about learning and speaking English in particular. In order to identify any weak learners and assist them in overcoming their lack of confidence, teachers should move around the classroom, engaging in conversation with individual learners.

For learners, learners' perspectives must be altered for them to learn spoken English. English should be as important to learners as other subjects, and speaking skills in particular should be regarded as essential. They must comprehend the importance of learning a language, particularly speaking ability, in order to communicate with foreigners. This is the primary

reason for learning a foreign language, not tests or exams. Learners feel comfortable and accepted in an environment in which their participation is valued and is likely to lead to success. Establishing a positive relationship between learners and teachers is crucial. Teachers must also consistently encourage and support learners. Ensure that all classroom activities encourage learners' abilities rather than frustrating them with their limitations. In addition, the learners' self-esteem will be boosted by the teachers' positive behaviors, and they will not feel stressed in the classroom. Teachers should be cautious and compassionate when promoting learning activities. The findings of the study indicate that textbooks also discourage learner participation in class discussions. Teachers should provide topics that are more relevant and appropriate for the learner's age, English proficiency level, and the real world in order to create a fun classroom environment that encourages shy learners to speak. Personal experience-related topics will make the class interesting and lively. A minority of them, however, have stated that some of the topics lack relevance to the real world and are quite dull. In this circumstance, teachers can alter textbook topics to make them more relevant, meaningful, or familiar to their learners. In addition, the teacher's questions should generate new knowledge, new responses, and meaningful thoughts from learners. In addition, teachers should have the necessary vocabulary, grammar, and history knowledge to assist learners with difficult or uncommon topics. Then, learners would be willing to participate in the activity. When learners work in pairs or small groups, most of them use Vietnamese in speaking activities. The teachers will consider whether the activity or assignment is appropriately challenging for the learners. The teachers also ensure that the learners have enough of the necessary knowledge to use vocabulary and grammar to complete the task. If the language is too difficult, they may return to their native tongue, and if the task is too simple, they may become bored and return to their native tongue. Also be aware that some learners, especially beginners, frequently use their mother tongue as an emotional support before attempting to speak, translating every word before speaking. In the case of these learners, patience is all that is required, as their reliance on their native language will likely decrease as their English proficiency improves. A second method for discouraging learners from speaking in their mother tongue is to walk around the classroom to monitor the learners' participation and assist them as needed.

This study focused solely on teaching fourth-grade learners at THĐPS English-speaking skills. In the study, only a small fraction of the issues associated with teaching and learning speaking skills are addressed. Several suggestions for future research: (1) A study of techniques and activities that help learners improve their speaking abilities; (2) A study on how to introduce learners to new methods for acquiring speaking abilities.

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