

Difficulties In Teaching And Learning Speaking Skills For Lower Secondary Students At Abc School

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Abstract

In daily life, people primarily use English to express their opinions, provide explanations, and engage in arguments. Students must be able to speak English effectively in order to get better results in their English studies and a satisfactory career. This study aims to investigate the challenges teachers and students at Asian Bilingual College encounter when teaching and learning English-speaking skills, as well as the measures taken by these individuals to mitigate these issues. The study subjects were 63 students and 20 English teachers. Research data were obtained from questionnaires and interviews by both students and teachers. Our analysis of the text revealed overarching themes and sub-themes. The overall findings demonstrated that teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) presents four significant challenges: 1) linguistic problems (students' lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of using their mother tongue); (2) internal problems (students' low self-esteem, don't pay attention, passive—low participation, made so much noise, lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and low motivation); (3) external problems (the lack of regular practice time, the class size, the time limit, the exams, the arrangement of tables and chairs, and mixed student's level); (4) teaching method (restricted knowledge, determining the method and material, finding intriguing activities, and designing assessments). Student life is challenging due to three prominent issues: (1) linguistic problems (lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of thinking in the mother tongue first); (2) internal problems (afraid of making mistakes, nervousness or anxiety, demotivation, lack of confidence, and hesitations); (3) external problems (textbooks, peers, and environment) when attempting to learn to speak the English language. The solutions to overcome these challenges were also suggested in this study. The teacher instructed the students to memorize vocabulary, build their confidence, provide consistent practice for students, and participate in teacher training and resources.

Keywords: *difficulties, teachers, students, teaching and learning, speaking skills, solution, Asian Bilingual College.*

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I. Introduction

One essential skill that any foreign language student must acquire is the proficiency in oral communication. When assessing someone's proficiency in a foreign language, a popular inquiry is if they can converse in English. According to Nunan (1991), acquiring the skill of speaking is the most crucial part of learning a second or foreign language for most individuals. Success in this regard is determined by one's capacity to engage in a conversation in the target language.

Speaking is one of the language skills that plays an important role in many countries around the world. Speaking is considered a way of communicating issues to other people. Furthermore, speaking allows people to express their ideas, thoughts, and emotions about certain situations with others around them. According to Tarigan (1990: 15), speaking is the ability to use articulation sounds or words to express, state, and convey an idea, thought, or feeling. Nurgiyantoro (2001: 282) also stated that speaking is an activity to produce language and communicate ideas and thoughts orally. Additionally, Nunan (1991: 41) supported that speaking is the same as oral interaction, which are common ways of presenting information and expressing our ideas and thoughts in our minds. Nunan (1991: 39) also quoted that "to most people, mastering the art of speaking is the most important aspect of learning a second foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out conversation in the language."

Education places significant importance on the development of English-speaking skills. This is because it allows students to communicate effectively, interact with global communities, and achieve their academic and career goals. Nevertheless, despite acknowledgment of its importance, the teaching and learning of English-speaking skills pose significant obstacles, particularly at the lower secondary level. According to Ork, Yong & Chin, Pisith & Ban, Thach & Em, Sereyath (2024). "Speaking is the active utilization of language to

communicate meaning, and for young language learners, speaking is the main method through which they encounter, understand, use, and acquire new languages. In the classroom, the spoken form of language is the main way young learners acquire language, rather than merely being a small part of the process. However, difficulties with speaking may provide substantial barriers to achieving proficiency in a second language and effectively communicating. Regardless of their level of knowledge in the English language, students who are studying English as a foreign language continue to have difficulties in oral communication. Language learners' lack of sufficient expertise in the area hinders their ability to speak effectively and correctly."

"For most foreign language learners, speaking in target language is not an easy thing to undertake because learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules." (Heriansyah, 2012). Additionally, according to some researchers, students may face a variety of challenges and obstacles while attempting to learn English. They are easily prone to making a variety of errors in the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary use of the English language. To become fluent in a foreign language, it is not enough to just be familiar with its grammatical and semantic rules.

Not only do students have difficulties, but teachers also often have difficulty teaching speaking skills. According to Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019) and Yusuf and Zuraini (2016), teaching speaking in general is very difficult for instructors. This is because teachers are required to completely lead students to talk in an appropriate way, and they must also stress correctness, pronunciation, substance, and other aspects of speaking. Teaching people to speak is not an easy task. Teaching speaking presents several challenges, with multiple elements influencing students' willingness to learn a foreign language from their language instructor. For example, the lack of vocabulary and the influence of one's mother tongue pose significant challenges. Teachers had difficulty instructing students who were not proficient in the English language. Learning a language entails not only theoretical knowledge but also practical application in real-world communication (Dalimunthe et al., 2018). It indicates that if someone wants to learn a language, let alone the skill of speaking it, they must combine theory with as much practice as possible, just as if they want to teach speaking in another language, the teacher must first master it. Because pupils do not speak English as their first language, instructors often struggle to transmit English to individuals who do not master areas of speaking competency such as vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse competence, social competence, and so on. Moreover, it is essential for a teacher to understand the problems that students encounter while speaking a foreign language. The researcher believes that by identifying these difficulties, she will be able to assist foreign language teachers in minimizing them and successfully teaching English.

Asian Bilingual College (ABC), a major educational institution, exemplifies the wider difficulties faced in teaching and learning English, specifically at the lower secondary level. ABC faces unique challenges in tailoring efficient language instruction to the unique needs and backgrounds of its diverse student community in a culturally vibrant and linguistically diverse environment. Factors such as varying English competence levels, diverse language origins, and cultural influences influence the complexity of teaching and learning speaking skills. Moreover, the pedagogical techniques and instructional strategies used at ABC have a crucial impact on students' language learning experiences. The interactions and relationships within the classroom, the accessibility of materials, and the methods used to evaluate learning all impact the effectiveness of teaching English as a second language. Gaining insight into these contextual aspects is critical for discerning the specific challenges encountered by educators and students in improving speaking abilities.

This study aims to investigate the difficulties involved in teaching and learning speaking skills among Lower Secondary students at Asian Bilingual College. This research seeks to provide significant insights into the underlying challenges that prevent the development of speaking competency by analyzing contextual nuances, pedagogical strategies, and individual obstacles in the language learning process. Furthermore, it aims to improve the ongoing speaking on language education by analyzing the complicated process of teaching English language proficiency at the lower secondary level within the distinctive setting of Asian Bilingual College. The goal is to improve our understanding of the difficulties and possibilities associated with teaching and learning speaking skills.

II. Literature Review

The nature of speaking skills

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are one of the four language skills. Speaking is the act of conveying one's thoughts and ideas using a certain language. According to Febriyanti (2011), speaking refers to the act of conveying ideas via both verbal and nonverbal communication. In today's world, it is essential for students to acquire proficiency in spoken English since it enables them to measure someone's linguistic proficiency (Nazara, 2011). In addition, Nazara (2011) emphasized the significance of speaking proficiency in light of English's status as the global language.

The Stages of Speaking Skills Brown (2004) states five stages of speaking performance. They are imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive.

1. Imitative: the capacity to accurately replicate a word, phrase, or even a sentence.
2. Intensive: the creation of brief segments of spoken language intended to showcase proficiency in a certain area of grammar, phrases, vocabulary, or phonological patterns.
3. Responsive: This performance encompasses the ability to engage and understand tests, but only to a very limited extent, such as in a very brief chat, basic greetings, casual conversation, simple requests, and remarks.
4. Interactive: During this stage, the discussion becomes longer and more complex compared to the responsive stage. It may consist of many exchanges and/or multiple participants.
5. Extensive: Extensive oral production includes speeches, oral presentations, and storytelling.

Type of Language Skills

Writing, reading, and listening are also important skills, but speaking is the most important one. Speaking is the most important part of language because it shows how well people understand it (Shteivi & Hamuda, 2016). Also, speaking is important for students to learn because it helps them talk to each other more easily (Nazara, 2011).

There are two types of language skills: receptive skills and productive skills. Masduqi (2016) stated that students use receptive skills when they receive information from the teacher. Receptive skills encompass two essential skills: listening and reading. Meanwhile, Masduqi (2016) also stated that productive skills are the skills when the students produce the language. There are two types of productive skills: speaking and writing.

The role of speaking skill in language teaching

In the current global setting, it is essential for people to possess a high level of proficiency in the English language. In Vietnam, English is considered a core subject in both private and government educational institutions, including universities. Thus, it is crucial for students to have superior oral communication skills and for teachers to possess efficient pedagogical techniques for teaching speaking. It is undeniable that our spoken communication exceeds our written communication on a daily basis. Therefore, speaking has the utmost significance in a language. As instructors, we heavily rely on our students' verbal communication to get information about their knowledge acquisition in the classroom setting (Edge, 1999). Moreover, speaking is considered the first step in evaluating one's proficiency in a language, whether they know or do not know it. Ur (1996, p. 120) emphasized that "speaking seems intuitively the most important language skill, and people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing, and many, if not most, foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak." To put it simply, the level of success in language acquisition is determined by one's proficiency in engaging in a conversation in the target language (Nunan, 1991). As a result, language learners prioritize speaking over other language abilities.

Goh and Burns (2012) categorize speaking skills into four distinct categories, providing a valuable framework for lesson preparation in the field of education. The four categories of speaking proficiency include: (a) correct pronunciation; (b) effective speech function, such as making requests or expressing gratitude; (c) skillful interaction management, including taking turns and regulating conversations using verbal and non-verbal cues; and (d) discourse organization, which involves creating coherence and cohesion through the use of structure and word choice. Hence, it is important for instructors to assist pupils in developing both substantial fluency and proficient listening abilities in conversations. During oral communication, children acquire skills in structuring concepts, ordering phrases, and articulating language with accurate pronunciation and understandable expression. In addition, students must acquire knowledge about effectively conveying the intended message of the language in accordance with the specific situation in which they are communicating.

Speaking abilities are essential for effective human communication (Ur, 1996) and play a crucial role in the teaching of foreign languages. Comprehending a language implies the ability to articulate in that language. Furthermore, it serves as a means for cultivating and maintaining social connections, as well as facilitating career growth.

Teaching and learning speaking skills

Teaching speaking skills

Teaching may be defined as the act of transferring information to students. During a teaching activity, the instructor conveys knowledge, information, or skills to the student while simultaneously engaging in an interactive process with the pupils. The term teaching has been defined in several ways by researchers. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (in Ball and Forzani, 2009) provide a definition of teaching as the act of assisting others in acquiring knowledge and skills that are considered valuable. They emphasize that teaching also has a moral aspect. In addition, Ball and Forzani, (2009) said that teaching, which may be defined as assisting others in acquiring certain skills, is a common practice that many individuals consistently participate in.

According to Nunan in Kayi, Hayriye (2006:1) teaching speaking involves instructing the listener to: (1) produce English speech sounds and patterns, (2) utilize words and sentences with proper stress, intonation, and rhythm in the second language, (3) choose appropriate words and sentences based on social context, audience, situation, and subject matter, (4) organize thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, (5) use language to express values and judgments, (6) speak the language swiftly and confidently with minimal pauses, known as fluency.

Teaching learners to speak a second language entails helping them acquire distinct sets of interactional and communicative abilities because spoken conversation takes place in real time. Various categories of learners possess distinct and varying requirements in order to acquire the skill of effective verbal communication. For instance, it is necessary for all students to participate in informal or formal communication, while those pursuing a business degree or working in the field are often obligated to deliver presentations and respond to inquiries. International students must teach lessons, attend to their students' issues, and be ready to think quickly and adapt. Fluency in a second language (L2) requires the acquisition of speech-processing and oral production abilities, including accurate pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, information sequencing, and discourse organization.

River (2018) argues that the primary objective of teaching speaking is to cultivate communicative proficiency. Learners often experience hesitancy while attempting to communicate themselves, characterized by the use of cliché terms to fill gaps, excessive repetition, and a tendency to be vague as they search for the most suitable combination of elements to convey their intended meaning [1, p. 15-16].

Using English as a foreign language (EFL) or as a secondary language (ESL) in spoken communication is unquestionably one of the most popular, but also one of the most challenging tasks to consider when teaching English. This is particularly true given that fluency in English has become essential for advancement in various fields of human endeavor (Al-Sib, 2004, p. 3).

The most important goal of teaching speaking is to enhance the students' oral proficiency. Consequently, language learning activities conducted in the classroom should strive to optimize the extent to which individuals use language (Haozhang, 1997). In the past, oral communication teaching has been ignored due to the mistaken belief that oral communication ability organically improves over time and that the cognitive abilities required for writing automatically transfer to similar oral communication skills (Chaney, 1998).

The teaching of speaking in the target language should prepare students to utilize the language orally for a variety of reasons. The success of the teaching-learning process depends on the teacher's ability to provide the contents in a manner that increases the students' interest. The instructor should use creative techniques while delivering English instruction to the pupils. In addition, they must also engage in the application of diverse pedagogical methods, meticulously curate instructional resources, and use captivating educational media that align with the students' needs, all with the aim of facilitating their oral proficiency in the target language. Harmer (2001) suggests several speaking activities for language instruction, such as scripted acting, communication games, discussions, prepared speeches, and simulations and role plays. During every classroom speaking activity, it is essential for the instructor to provide students with the chance to express their thoughts and discuss topics that are both significant and engaging to them. It is better for teachers to provide pupils with the chance to demonstrate their understanding of English.

Learning speaking skills

Exposure, opportunities to use the language, motivation, and instruction are the four criteria that must be present in order for language learning to take place. These factors are necessary for successful language learning. Willis (1996) asserts that learners require opportunities to express their thoughts and emotions, engage in experimentation in a safe and encouraging environment, and use the language they have encountered without fear or threat.

Second-language research emphasizes the idea that intentional attempts to learn do not lead to development. Progress is achieved via the activation of spontaneous and subconscious processes when learners engage in conversation with the second language. According to Littlewood (1984), the subconscious aspect necessitates a different set of tasks, where learners aren't mainly concerned with the language itself but with communicating meaning. According to Harmer (1982), it is important for students to prioritize the contents of their communication rather than the structure while engaging in a communicative activity. It is advisable to use a diverse range of vocabulary.

Ellis (2003) suggests that learners might engage in two types of communication activities to achieve this goal: focused communicative tasks and unfocused communicative tasks. Both of these activities aim to involve learners in the practical use of language rather than just demonstrating linguistic proficiency. Their objective is to enhance language competence by means of conversation. According to Littlewood (1984), communication allows learners to combine different structures in order to create a system that effectively conveys meaning.

In the EFL classroom, challenges may arise in the process of teaching and learning English. Students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have more difficulty acquiring listening and speaking skills due to their

lack of immersion in an English-speaking environment. EFL students should actively seek opportunities to immerse themselves in English via various means. Participating in the classroom may be an effective strategy to practice and improve their speaking skills. In Vietnam, English is considered a main subject at school, which means students need to be more open to media such as printed media and electronic media that use English as the main language. This requires a significant amount of motivation and effort.

Teacher's difficulties in teaching English speaking skills

A challenge is a condition or a set of events that presents difficulties and necessitates resolution. It serves as a source of motivation for individuals to improve their problem-solving skills. In addition, Rosalina et al. (2020) a challenge is a task or situation that is seen as difficult or demanding. Teaching English is a demanding task, and educators encounter several obstacles while teaching spoken English skills to young learners. When instructing oral communication at educational institutions or programs, teachers encounter a multitude of obstacles that could hinder the acquisition of knowledge. Nunan (2010) identified five obstacles that English instructors may encounter while teaching young learners. The problems include several aspects, including: 1) cognitive advancement; 2) motivation; 3) attention; 4) multiple groups; and 5) assessment.

Additionally, teachers face a variety of challenges. The prevalent issues include the size of the class and students struggling to identify the right vocabulary word, a sign of their limited vocabulary knowledge. When they are trying to express their thoughts, they find it difficult to construct sentences. On the other hand, students tend to speak their mother tongue when talking about different tasks. Or students' participation is very low. Their fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates was the reason they didn't speak in the classroom. They are afraid of the ridicule they may receive for their mistakes.

Rezeki, Putri, and Dalimunte, Muhammad (2024) reported that their findings identified five major teacher's challenges in teaching speaking: 1) teachers' lack of vocabulary; 2) students' lack of motivation and student anxiety; 3) insufficient school facilities and equipment; 4) curriculum used."

Al-Iftah (2020) said that a variety of obstacles arose, some of which were caused by pupils, some by instructors, and others by the school's facilities. Students face challenges such as a lack of language knowledge, poor focus, a lack of discipline, boredom, and difficulty speaking. Meanwhile, instructors face obstacles such as a scarcity of teachers, insufficient grasp of instructional techniques, and a lack of professional development. In addition, there are facility difficulties, such as insufficient resources and facilities, as well as time constraints. The study was conducted by Putri, H. S. K., and Nurjati, N. (2023).

"Most of the challenges faced by teachers were 1) lack of students self-confidence, 2) unclear students' pronunciation, and 3) parent involvement."

According to the explanation above, the researcher defines four main types of difficulties that teachers frequently encounter when teaching speaking English: linguistic, internal problems, teaching method-related, and external.

Linguistic problems

Teaching speaking in general is very challenging for teachers because teachers need to fully guide students to speak in a good way and emphasize accuracy, pronunciation, content, etc. (Paneerselvam & Mohamad, 2019; Yusuf & Zuraini, 2016). This also becomes difficult if speaking instruction is done to teach a language that they do not accept as their mother tongue. In reality, learning a language involves not only theoretical knowledge but also practical application in real-world communication, which is integral to the language's function (Dalimunthe et al., 2018). It means that when someone wants to master a language, let alone the skill of speaking that language, they must combine theory with practicing it as often as possible, just as if they are going to teach speaking in another language, the teacher must first master it. Because students do not master English as a mother tongue, teachers often have difficulty transferring English to those who do not master aspects of speaking competence such as vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse competence, social competence, etc.

Internal problems

Internal issues, such as anxiety, lack of desire, and lack of confidence, may potentially impact an individual's language acquisition of English (Burns, 2017). Spada and Lightbown (2010) found numerous elements that might affect language learners, such as anxiety, stress, and anxiousness. The emotions mentioned have a substantial negative impact on the process of acquiring a foreign language (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2011). Additionally, the latest study by Salam et al. (2021) has shown that anxiety negatively affects the enhancement of English-speaking abilities. Students' anxiety and stress when learning to speak English pose significant difficulties for teachers, as highlighted by researchers like Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who first introduced the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety. Anxious students often exhibit inhibited participation, reduced performance, and inconsistent progress, which complicates teachers' ability to assess and support their language development effectively. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) noted that anxiety can disrupt cognitive

processes, leading to issues with vocabulary recall and sentence formation. This heightened stress can create a negative classroom atmosphere, affecting not only the anxious students but their peers as well. Teachers must invest extra time and effort in creating a supportive environment and implementing anxiety-reducing strategies, such as positive reinforcement and ample speaking practice opportunities. Addressing these emotional barriers is crucial for fostering a more conducive learning environment and helping students overcome their fears, thereby enhancing their language acquisition process.

Motivation is the second problem that English instructors may encounter with young learners. Maintaining the pupils' motivation is crucial. Dörnyei (2020) identified two categories of motivation. In integrative motivation, a learner's primary purpose while learning a new language is to engage with the speakers and learn about their culture. Meanwhile, instrumental motivation refers to instances in which the student learns a language for practical reasons, such as acquiring a better job, earning a higher salary, passing an exam, or other practical goals. At the same time, various things may impact pupils' motivation. There are two things: objective clarity and relevance. Understanding the expected outcomes of certain subjects and their potential connections to other subjects will greatly motivate students. According to Dick, Carey, and Carey (2005), educating students about the goals of teaching will help them use an effective learning method and determine the relevance of instruction. As a result, instructors must be able to provide both of these features while teaching young learners, including English.

Furthermore, gaining the pupils' attention is an important issue. Getting the pupils' attention is the first thing that instructors should be able to achieve since children's attention spans are restricted. Sustaining learners' attention during teaching is critical for them to learn and perform (Dick et al., 2015). In this instance, instructors must change the activities in order to keep students engaged. Thus, including a diversity of learning styles in the activities is likely to be a good idea.

Besides, if pupils remain passive when learning to speak English, it presents considerable obstacles for teachers. Passive students often do not participate actively in classroom activities, discussions, or practice exercises, which are critical for language development. This lack of participation restricts their capacity to practice speaking and get quick feedback, both of which are essential for language development. Furthermore, passive behavior may disrupt the dynamics of the classroom, making it difficult for instructors to maintain an involved and energetic learning environment. It may also result in an unequal allocation of attention, with more proactive students dominating conversations, further marginalizing passive learners. This situation necessitates teachers using extra strategies to increase involvement, which may be time-consuming and may not always provide the intended outcomes, therefore reducing the class's overall development.

External Problems

External factors induce additional obstacles to the teaching of speaking. External factors include a lack of supportive facilities and large classes. Al-Sohbi and Preece (2018) found that the absence of audio facilities, instructors, books, posters, and other resources poses a significant challenge in teaching English to pupils. Similarly, the size of the class is a significant component that influences their professional experience (Shamin & Coleman, 2018). Instructing the desired language proves to be a challenging task and lacks efficacy when dealing with a classroom size of 40 or 45 students. Large class sizes further complicate this issue, making individual attention and meaningful speaking opportunities scarce, while also posing difficulties in classroom management and ensuring active participation. Teachers have several challenges in large classrooms, resulting in poor teaching and learning outcomes. In a class, there are multi-level groups. Diversity in a group of students will lead to a serious problem. The diversity includes different motivation, different learning styles, different first languages, and especially different proficiency. Therefore, teachers must be able to deal with children with those differences. Teachers must design materials and tasks that vary in difficulty to accommodate the differences in proficiency levels. Last but not least, limited class time constrains the duration and frequency of speaking practice, which is often sidelined by the need to cover other language competencies such as reading, writing, and listening. Teachers only provide feedback to a select few students in each class due to time constraints.

Strategies to Develop Learner' English Speaking Skills

Enhancing learners' English-speaking abilities encompasses a range of tactics, as emphasized by several studies. Brown (2001) suggests that a successful method involves integrating interactive activities, such as role plays and group discussions, to stimulate learners to engage in spoken communication within authentic situations. Nunan (1999) highlights the significance of task-based learning, in which students participate in meaningful activities that need communication, so promoting both fluency and confidence. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), using technology, such as language learning applications and online platforms, may provide extra possibilities for practicing speaking skills outside the confines of the classroom. In addition, Harmer (2007) supports the use of a comprehensive approach that incorporates both accuracy-focused exercises, such as pronunciation drills, and fluency activities in order to promote total skill development. These tactics together

contribute to the establishment of a dynamic and supportive learning environment that amplifies learners' speaking capabilities.

Previous study

According to Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013) conducted research on the challenges encountered by undergraduate students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in speaking skills. The study's results indicated that EFL students believe their speaking abilities in English to be inadequate, and the study also identified the causes for this perceived difficulty. The research revealed that EFL students have a poor level of competency in speaking, and there is little training of the speaking skill in university courses. The research identified many prominent challenges, including those related to communication in the native language (L1), managing large class sizes, and limited time availability.

Furthermore, Fistia and Nia (2021) demonstrated that the primary challenges faced by the lecturer were difficulties in describing the subject of advanced speaking, as the majority of students were unfamiliar with the new topics presented by the lecturers and provided fewer in-depth explanations. Moreover, the challenges faced by the students encompassed three key elements. There are three types of factors: knowledge, psychology, and language.

Additionally, Nakhalah (2016) "Problems and Difficulties of Speaking That Encounter English Language Students at Al Quds Open University" The research seeks to investigate the speaking challenges experienced by English language students at Al Quds Open University. Furthermore, the research tries to investigate the sources of such issues. The findings revealed and suggested that the students had difficulty speaking for a variety of reasons, including fear of making mistakes, shyness, nervousness, and a lack of confidence. The researcher accepted various suggestions, the most significant of which is to create an atmosphere that supports and encourages students to speak English often, as well as to do further research and studies on the speaking issues that English language students face.

The previous study had discussed challenges in speaking skills with its strategies from teacher perspectives. According to Al-Esaifer and AlShareef (2018), the common challenges of speaking faced by the students are mother tongue and linguistic, for example, vocabulary. Similarly, this research only discussed the strategies to overcome the challenges from teacher perspectives. However, none of the previous studies studied both challenges and strategies from students' perspectives.

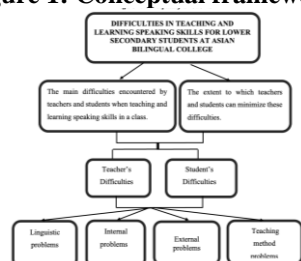
Luong Thi Huyen (2014) conducted an action research study on teaching and learning speaking English at Binh Gia High School-Lang Son. In her study, she identified the main challenges faced by students in learning English speaking skills, which included a low level of English proficiency, lack of motivation, and difficulties in avoiding the use of their mother tongue. In addition, the challenges faced by instructors in teaching English speaking abilities were a lack of adequate communicative ability and ineffective instructional approaches.

Tran Thi Thao (2012) conducted research on the topic of "Teaching speaking skills for the first-year students at Thai Nguyen College of Economics and Technology: problems and recommendations." In her study, she identified a number of reasons that contribute to the difficulties that arise when teaching and learning speaking skills. These reasons include the students' level of language proficiency, the absence of interesting topics, prior learning experience, distant teachers, and a fear of receiving full English instruction. Furthermore, she found that more than two-thirds of students continue to be reluctant to respond to the teacher and remain silent until they are singled out to answer questions.

Besides, Vu Thi Thuy (2014) conducted a study to investigate the challenges encountered by instructors and students at Nhi Chieu Upper Secondary School, located in Kinh Mon district, Hai Duong Province, with regards to the teaching and learning of English-speaking skills, as well as the potential solutions to these challenges. According to the study's findings, there are a few common factors that contribute to the problems, such as the high demand for the textbook. Students may find that the activities in the textbook are so difficult that they are unable to successfully complete their speaking practices. This is another reason why students do not spend their time practicing English.

Conceptual framework

Figure 1: Conceptual frameworks



Asian Bilingual College. It draws on the theoretical foundations laid out by Nunan (2010) and Ur (1996). The diagram above shows that the difficulties in learning and teaching speaking skills have four problems. These are linguistic problems, internal problems, lecturer's teaching method-related problems, and external problems. Previous study described issues and solutions from the perspectives of instructors and students. In this study, the researcher hopes to investigate additional obstacles and solutions for speaking abilities that may arise from the perspectives of instructors and students. Furthermore, the researcher utilized previous research as references to supplement the data in this study. The graphic above depicts the research's conceptual framework.

Research questions

To achieve those aims, this study poses the following research questions:

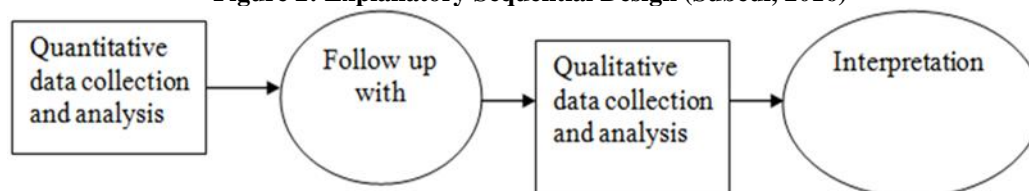
1. What are the main difficulties encountered by teachers and students when teaching and learning speaking skills in a class?
2. What efforts are made by English teachers and students to minimize these problems?

III. Methodology

Research design

This research plan employed an explanatory sequential design, also known as a "two-phase design," which involves first collecting and analyzing quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data based on the quantitative results. It tried to collect both numbers and descriptions. We gathered quantitative data through two questionnaires, one for teachers and the other for students, to understand the difficulties teachers and students faced in teaching and learning speaking skills at ABC School. We analyzed the information from the questionnaires using the mean, percentages, and standard deviation (S.D.) and then interpreted the results. After getting the quantitative data from the surveys, interviews would be used to get more detailed information about the difficulties in learning and teaching English-speaking skills and the efforts made by English teachers and students to minimize these problems. Figure 2 illustrates the exploratory sequential design.

Figure 2: Explanatory Sequential Design (Subedi, 2016)



"Explanatory sequential design starts with quantitative data collection and analysis and then follows up with qualitative data collection and analysis, which leads to interpretation. This helps determine what quantitative results need further explanation." (see Figure 2)

Research site

This study was situated at Asia Bilingual College located in Bien Hoa City, Dong Nai Province. Asian Bilingual College (ABC), a major educational institution, exemplifies the wider difficulties faced in teaching and learning English, specifically at the lower secondary level. ABC faces unique challenges in tailoring efficient language instruction to the unique needs and backgrounds of its diverse student community in a culturally vibrant and linguistically diverse environment. Factors such as varying English competence levels, diverse language origins, and cultural influences influence the complexity of teaching and learning speaking skills. Moreover, the pedagogical techniques and instructional strategies used at ABC have a crucial impact on students' language learning experiences. The interactions and relationships within the classroom, the accessibility of materials, and the methods used to evaluate learning all impact the effectiveness of teaching English as a second language. Gaining insight into these contextual aspects is critical for discerning the specific challenges encountered by educators and students in improving speaking abilities.

Sample and sampling procedures

In this study, the researcher will use convenience sampling. "Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access. This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate in the research. Sometimes called accidental sampling, convenience sampling is a type of non-random sampling." (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The study's subjects were 63 sixth grade students at ABC School and 20 teachers who are currently teaching or have taught speaking at ABC School. The researcher selected these

students from two grade 6 classes (6.9 and 6.10), with 31 females and 32 males. The researcher also selected 20 teachers (1 male and 19 female teachers) from ABC School who were teaching speaking skills to students as study participants to identify the challenges they faced in teaching speaking skills to their students. In the interview, the researcher contacted five teachers (20 teachers) and five 6th graders (63 students) for in-depth interviews.

Research instruments

The research used a mix of methods called an sequential approach (Creswell, 2013) to data collection: survey and interviews to acquire in-depth, rich data and information to investigate the situation and difficulties that teachers and students faced in teaching and learning speaking skills at ABC School and the effort are made by them to minimize these difficulties.

Survey questionnaires

“Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers. Questionnaires are particularly efficient for gathering data on a large- scale basis. For example, whereas interviews might be used effectively with a few of the participants in a language program, a survey would be more effective for obtaining the views of all the participants.” (Brown, J. D, 2001)

“A questionnaire is a very convenient way of collecting information from a large number of people within a period of time. Hence, the design of the questionnaire is of utmost importance to ensure accurate data is collected so that the results are interpretable and generalizable.” (Jen, 2006). In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire to gather information from the respondents to answer the research questions. The reference materials such as The TKT Course Modules 1, 2 and 3 (Spratt, M., Pulverness, A., & Williams, M, 2011) provided the researcher with some very useful information for the design of the survey questionnaire. We conducted the questionnaire to gather information on the challenges faced by students and teachers during their English-speaking lessons in the classroom. The questionnaire specifically contains 22 English-written statements for teachers and 22 statements for students. These were the goals: to discover the difficulties that teachers and students have encountered in teaching and learning to speak.

The teachers’ survey questionnaire

The teacher’s questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was intended to identify the difficulties that teachers encountered in teaching speaking skills at ABC School. The questionnaire used an interval scale (items 1–22) that measured the difficulties that teachers faced in teaching speaking skills at ABC School.

Table 3.1. Content of teachers’ difficulties

Research question	Items	Variables to measure
What are the main difficulties encountered by the teachers when teaching speaking skills in a class?	1 – 4	Linguistic problems
	5 – 11	Internal problems
	12 – 17	External problems
	18 – 22	Teacher’s method

Table 3.1 outlines the content of teachers’ difficulties when teaching speaking skills in a class. The table is structured around the main research question: “What are the main difficulties encountered by the teachers when teaching speaking skills in a class?”

- Items 1 – 4 measure Linguistic problems, which may include issues related to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and mother tongue that teachers face while instructing students in speaking skills.
- Items 5 – 11 focus on Internal problems, encompassing personal challenges that teachers might experience, such as lack of confidence, motivation, or insufficient training.
- Items 12 – 17 assess External problems, which could involve factors outside the teacher’s control, like large class sizes, limited resources, or lack of support from the school administration.
- Items 18 – 22 evaluate the Teaching method, examining how the approaches and techniques used by teachers affect their ability to effectively teach speaking skills in the classroom.

According to Walley, Custance, Orton, Parsons, Lindgreen, and Hingley (2009), awareness can be positive, negative, or neutral. The main difficulties encountered by the teachers when teaching speaking skills in a class were measured using a Likert five-point scale. The answers were then scored on a Likert scale with five ranks that went from one to five:

1. means “strongly disagree”
2. means “disagree”
3. means “uncertain”
4. means “agree”
5. means “strongly agree”

The questionnaire was checked for accuracy before being sent to teachers.

The students’ survey questionnaire

The aim of the students’ questionnaire (see Appendix 2 ‘English version’, Appendix 3 ‘Vietnamese version’) to identify the difficulties that students faced in learning speaking skills at ABC School. The questionnaire used an interval scale (items 1–22) that measured figuring out the difficulties that students faced in learning speaking skills at ABC School. (see Table 3.2)

Table 3.2. Content of students’ difficulties

Research question	Items	Variables to measure
What are the main difficulties encountered by the students when learning speaking skills in a class?	1 – 7	Linguistic problems
	8 – 12	Internal problems
	13-17	External
	18-22	Lecturers’ teaching method

The students’ difficulties were measured using a Likert five-point scale. The answers were then scored on a Likert scale with five ranks that went from one to five. The answers were then scored on a Likert scale with five ranks that went from one to five:

1. means “strongly disagree”
2. means “disagree”
3. means “uncertain”
4. means “agree”
5. means “strongly agree”

Interviews

“Interviews are procedures used for gathering oral data in particular categories (if the interview is well planned and structured in advance), but also for gathering data that was not anticipated at the outset. Interviews can be conducted with individuals, ni groups, or by telephone.” (Brown, J. D, 2001). An interview is a kind of interaction in which the interviewees provide information orally. Interviews provide personal information, which helps in the acquisition of comprehensive information. It is used to get information on feelings, attitudes, or emotions in response to specific questions that cannot be answered via questionnaires or classroom observation (Koul, 1984; Selinger & Shahomy, 1989). In the current study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 20 EFL teachers and 63 sixth graders who are teaching and learning at Asian Bilingual College. As a result, interviews were conducted with all EFL instructors and students seeking information about the difficulties they experienced and how they minimize these difficulties while teaching and learning speaking skills. During the interview, the researcher captured what they said on a tape recorder for further analysis. Because this kind of recording technique assisted the researcher in avoiding or minimizing loss or misinterpretation of material during the write-up phase of the study, interview sessions with instructors and students lasted ten to thirty minutes. Because the number of instructors and students was limited, we included an open-ended questionnaire in the interview session.

Questions for teachers:

What are difficulties in teaching speaking skills?

- To what extent do your students struggle with English grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation when speaking?
- What internal factors (e.g., anxiety, shyness, lack of self-belief) do you think most hinder your students’ willingness to speak?

What efforts are you making to minimize these problems?

- In what ways do you try to integrate speaking skills with other language skills (listening, reading, writing) in your lessons?
- To what extent can you minimize these difficulties?

• **Questions for students**

What are difficulties in learning speaking skill?

- To what extent do you struggle with English grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation when speaking?
- How do you feel about your vocabulary size? Do you often struggle to find the right words?
- Do you feel anxious or nervous when speaking English in class? Why or why not?
- Do you find it hard to stay motivated to practice speaking English? What affects your motivation?
- Do you feel self-conscious or worried about making mistakes when speaking English?
- How confident are you in your English-speaking abilities?

Do you have any ways to mitigate these difficulties? If so, what are they?

Data collection procedures

The researcher used primary data collection methods. “Primary data or raw data is a type of information that is obtained directly from the first-hand source through experiments, surveys or observations.” (Byju’s, n.d.). In the first phase, 63 students and 20 English teachers at ABC School were given questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed by for students, the questionnaire was administered directly in class during the researcher’s class time. For teachers, they did it on Google Form through the link sent by the researcher.

In the second phase, the researcher contacted five teachers and five 6th graders. These teachers consist of three teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience, one teacher with 3 years of teaching enjoying, and one young teacher with 1 year of teaching experience. Each teacher teaches a different class. Besides, these students consist of three students with more than 7 years of learning English, one student with 3 years of learning enjoying, and one young teacher with 1 year of learning experience for in-depth interviews at the locations and times they suggested. Teachers and students were asked and answered each question within a span of 10 to 30 minutes.

The interviews were all tape-recorded to free the respondent to participate in the discussion naturally and allow the information to be explored in depth. The researcher modified the questions and procedures based on the respondents’ responses during the interview.

Data analysis procedures

An analysis of data is not just a simple summary of the data and information obtained. It is essentially the method by which the researcher interprets the data and information obtained from the questionnaires and interviews of the survey. The scheme and the coding table in this research emerged from the analysis of the data, rather than being predetermined and imposed on the data and the information. The interview information was transcribed, and key themes were identified with a view to clarifying and complementing the statistical results.

To analyze the data regarding the challenges encountered by EFL teachers and sixth graders in teaching and learning English-speaking skills, a mixed-method approach was employed. Quantitative methods, including *descriptive statistical analysis*, were utilized for the survey data to identify prevalent issues and measure their impact. All of the data from each section was then compiled into one large data set. Data was downloaded to the computer, and then exported from excel and imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. We used Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 to tabulate the data.

Additionally, qualitative methods, specifically *thematic analysis* of interviews, provided deeper insights into these challenges and how is the teacher and student minimize these problems.

Validity & reliability, ethical considerations

In this study, the researcher ensured the validity and reliability of our findings through rigorous methodological approaches. Validity is concerned with the extent to which the data collection process measures what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is concerned with the consistency and stability of data collection procedures.

Validity

Content Validity

The content validity of our survey instruments was established through a thorough literature review and consultation with subject matter experts. We ensured that our instruments covered all relevant aspects of the constructs we aimed to measure. The feedback from experts was used to refine the instruments before the main data collection. In this study several types of questionnaires and interview questions (e.g., students and instructors) might be reviewed by different types of experts. The experts who review the questionnaires and interview items have enough experiences in research methodology as well as teaching experiences at various courses. Based on their comments some of the unclear and obscure items might be revised and the complex items could be reworded.

Also, according to these experts' revisions, some of the ineffective and nonfunctioning items could be discarded altogether. Furthermore, based on the experts' recommendations all the items might be changed from interrogative format to statement. In addition, the items could be face validated by these experts' recommendations and views.

Internal Validity

In this research data and findings, the researcher collected data through two instruments: questionnaires and interviews. Gathering data through one technique can be questionable, biased and weak. However, collecting information from two or a variety of sources and with a variety of techniques can confirm findings. The researcher obtain the same results and data from different sources and via different instruments, It can become sure that the data are valid.

External Validity

We aimed to ensure the generalizability of our findings by selecting a diverse sample representative of the broader population. Our sampling method included stratified convenient sampling, ensuring representation across different demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. We acknowledge that the study's setting in an urban environment may limit generalizability to rural populations.

Utility Criterion

The researchers should make sure that their studies' findings would be utilizable and provide enough and efficient information to the decision-makers at different teaching and learning institutes. Consequently, the findings of their research can be used to probe whether their courses are or are not useful. In this way, based on the results of their studies, the language courses can be modified.

Reliability

Researcher is a teacher in the field of English language teaching. Therefore, because they are familiar with the context and the people, they can start researching the topic and hope to bring about the most changes and innovations possible. In this study, the researcher was quite careful and detailed about the participants. Participants and informants for the study included current students and foreign language teachers at the school. Participants were selected through stratified convenient sampling. Additionally, language teachers during interview section were selected through purposive sampling based on their teaching experience. The methods of gathering data consist of questionnaires and interviews. Mainly, the quantitative data are analyzed through descriptive statistics and qualitative data by means of descriptive and thematic interpretations. The internal consistency of our measurement instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

Ethical considerations

According to Dobakhti, L. (2020) the researcher has some responsibilities which are necessary to observe during and even after the conduct of the study which are as follows:

- The researcher ensures the confidentiality of the data.
- The researcher should not deceive or betray the participants.
- The researcher should obtain the informed consents of the participants.
- The researcher should explain the purpose of conducting research to the informants.
- The researcher should honestly present a complete account of the research process.
- All the subjects should be treated equally.
- The researcher should think about the consequences of the study before conducting it.
- The results of the study should not harm or hurt participants and other stakeholders.
- The possible biases should be controlled and contained as far as possible.
- The researcher should respect the subjects and consider their needs and interests.

In this study, the researcher ensured that she strictly followed these responsibilities.

IV. Findings And Discussions

The previous chapter demonstrated the research approach employed in this study. The study's analysis of the questionnaires and interview data will be covered in the next chapter. The interpretation covers two important topics: the first section covers the main difficulties teachers and students encounter when teaching and learning speaking skills in a class, while the second section focuses on how teachers and students minimize these difficulties. The discussion of the key findings will come next.

Data analysis

Data analysis of the questionnaire

Data analysis of teachers' survey questionnaires

The instrument is a questionnaire to analyze the main difficulties teachers face when teaching speaking skills in class. There are two main parts to the questionnaire: The first part contains personal information from the teachers. The second part of the questionnaire comprises 22 statements, categorized into 4 parts: (1) linguistic problems; (2) internal problems; (3) external problems; and (4) the teaching methods. As for data collection, google form's link of the questionnaire were administered to these 20 teachers. Before answering the questionnaire, the participants were explained the purpose of the study, and it took them around 25 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The table below illustrates the design of the questionnaire in detail. (*see table 4.1*)

Table 4.1 The design of questionnaire in detail

Part	Items	Variables to measure
Part 1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	General Information
Part 2: The main teacher's difficulties	A1, A2, A3, A4	Linguistic problems
	B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7	Internal problems
	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6	External problems
	D1, D2, D3, D4, D5	Teaching methods

Part 1: General information about participants

The information about the teachers participated in the survey was presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Information about the teachers participated in the survey.

Gender	Number of teachers	Percentages
Male	1	5%
Female	19	95%
Total	20	100%

Table 4.2 shows that the number of teachers who took part in this study was 20. Among them, 19 teachers were female, accounting for 95%. The rest of the teachers (5%) were male.

Table 4.3. Teachers' year of teaching English

Teachers' year of teaching English	Teachers	Percentages
A. Less than 3 years	9	45%
B. 3 – 10 years	7	35%
C. More than 10 years	4	20%

The survey in Table 4.3 involved 20 English teachers; most of them were young teachers (< 35 years old). Among them, 4 teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience (20%); 7 teachers have worked as an English teacher for 3–10 years (35%); and 9 teachers have less than 3-year experience teaching (45%).

Part 2: The main teacher's difficulties

Reliability of the questionnaire

As mentioned above, the first cluster (item A1, A2, A3, A4), the second cluster (item B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7), the third cluster (item C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6), and the fourth cluster (D1, D2, D3, D4, D5) discovered teacher's difficulties towards Linguistic problems, Internal problems, External problems, and Teaching methods respectively in teaching speaking skills in a class. The researcher ran 22 Likert-scale items using Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of each construct. The participants' opinions were expressed using a Likert scale with the following format: (1) Strongly Disagree = SD; (2) Disagree =D; (3) Neutral = N; (4) Agree= A; (5) Strongly agree = SA. The means were interpreted as follows: Strongly disagree in the point range of 1.00 - 1.80, Disagree 1.81 - 2.60, Neutral 2.61 – 3.40, Agree 3.41 - 4.20, and strongly agree 4.21 - 5.00 (Pimentel, 2010). (*see Table 4.4*)

A group of question items is deemed credible when its Cronbach’s Alpha is more than .70 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008) and the Corrected Item-Total Correlation of each construct is higher than 0.3. The purpose of utilizing Cronbach’s Alpha is to assure the reliability of individual items. The statistical results from aforementioned tables revealed the reliability coefficient of the Cronbach’s Alpha scale of the experiment was higher than .70; and all of the observed variables had a total correlation greater than 0.3 (Corrected Item: Total Correlation > 0.3). Hence, the scale was reliable, and all the observed variables were capable of explaining the difficult factors. As a result, the scale was trustworthy, and the component could be explained by each of the observed variables. The data analysis and discussion are presented in the section that follows, which is organized in the same order as the questionnaire’s questions.

Table 4.5 Qualitative interpretation of 5-point Likert scale measurements

Likert-Scale Description	Likert-Scale	Likert Scale interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00 - 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 - 2.60
Neutral/Uncertain	3	2.61 - 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 - 4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21 - 5.00

After that, descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS version 26, and the outcomes are shown in the table below.

Difficulties encountered by the teachers when teaching speaking skills in a class.

Teachers’ Difficulties Towards Linguistic Problems

Items A1, A2, A3, and A4 look at how linguistic problems cause difficulties for teachers.

Table 4.6 Descriptive statistics of Teachers’ Difficulties towards Linguistic problems

Item	Statements	N	M	Std. D		SD	D	N	A	SA
A1	I asked the students to practice English with their partners, but sometimes they lacked the vocabulary to say something in English, so they used their mother tongue.	20	3.65	.671	F	0	1	4	6	9
					P	0	5	20	30	45
A2	My students often encounter difficulties rooted from the inability to use the selected grammatical structures that were introduced in the lessons of Global Success 6	20	3.85	.745	F	0	1	4	12	3
					P	0	5	20	60	15
A3	I am difficult to teach correct pronunciation because of the students innate ability.	20	3.55	.759	F	0	2	6	11	1
					P	0	10	30	55	5
A4	I had difficulty in training my students to speak English because they often used their native language (Vietnamese) in speaking.	20	3.60	.821	F	0	2	6	10	2
					P	0	10	30	50	10
Valid N (listwise)		20								

(Note: N=Number M = Mean; Std. D= Standard Deviation; F=Frequency; P= Percentage)

As illustrated in Table, it is worth noticing that the quantitative data of all items from A1 to A4 hold the mean scores within the bounds of 3.55–3.85 (agree), so it could be interpreted that the participants were in agreement about “I asked the students to practice English with their partners, but sometimes they **lacked the vocabulary** to say something in English, so they used their mother tongue.”, “My students often encounter difficulties rooted from the inability to use the **selected grammatical structures** that were introduced in the lessons of Global Success 6.”, “I am difficult to teach **correct pronunciation** because of the students innate ability.”, and “I had difficulty in training my students to speak English because they often used their native language (Vietnamese) in speaking.”. Each item’s descriptive output was specifically presented as follows:

First, at item A1, a substantial portion of the teacher body agreed that their students **lack the vocabulary** to speak English (6 agreeing and 9 strongly agreeing, or 45%). Four participants (20%) remained doubtful, and there was only one (5%) of those who were against the proposal. According to the data gathered, it is possible to understand that the students practiced English with their partners, but sometimes they lacked the vocabulary to say something in English, so they used their mother tongue. The means score for this item was 3.65.

The mean score item A2, “My students often encounter difficulties rooted from the inability to use the selected **grammatical structures** that were introduced in the lessons of Global Success 6.” was high (M = 3.85), with a standard deviation of .745. Seventy-five percent of the population under treatment chose “agree” (60% teachers agreed and 15% strongly agreed), 20% were indecisive, and only one teacher objected to the argument put forth when two levels were combined into one. We may understand that students often face difficulties stemming from their inability to use the selected grammatical structures introduced in the lessons of Global Success 6.

Regarding item A3 (M= 3.55). The responses were distributed so that 5% of the sample population selected “Strongly Agree” while 55% selected “Agree” 30% of the participants who remained were indifferent to the proposal, and 10% were against it. Based on the replies from the teachers, it can be inferred that a majority of the participants (60%) expressed a preference for the statements: “I am difficult to teach **correct pronunciation** because of the students innate ability.”.

Next, item A4 revealed that the majority of teachers (2/20 agree and 10/20 strongly agree) expressed difficulty in teaching their students to speak English due to the frequent use of their native language (Vietnamese). Only two students disagree on this item, and six respondents were undecided. As a result, the mean score for this item was 3.6, with a standard deviation of .821.

Teachers’ Difficulties Towards Internal Problems

Table 4.7 Descriptive statistics of teachers’ difficulties with internal problems

Item	Statements	N	M	Std. D		SD	D	N	A	SA
B1	My students lack the willingness to practice or improve their English skills due to low self-esteem.	20	4.15	.745	F	0	0	4	9	7
					P	0	0	20	45	35
B2	My students often don’t pay attention during English speaking class	20	4.00	.795	F	0	1	3	11	5
					P	0	5	15	55	25
B3	Students made so much noise that teachers in other classes complained when I do speaking activities in my class.	20	4.15	.671	F	0	0	3	11	6
					P	0	0	15	55	30
B4	Some of my students expressed hesitation when I suggested they practice their English because they were afraid, they would make errors.	20	4.20	.616	F	0	0	2	12	6
					P	0	0	10	60	30
B5	My students are passive, low participation, and always wait for the teacher to tell them the answers and to give examples in learning speaking skill.	20	3.95	.686	F	0	0	5	11	4
					P	0	0	25	55	20
B6	Students lack confidence so they can’t talk in front of the class.	20	4.05	.759	F	0	0	5	9	6
					P	0	0	25	45	30
B7	Students exhibit low motivation to learn English, frequently expressing that they find studying English challenging.	20	4.20	.616	F	0	0	2	12	6
					P	0	0	10	60	30
Valid N (listwise)		20								

(Note: N=Number M = Mean; Std. D= Standard Deviation; F=Frequency; P= Percentage)

Item B1 has the highest mean score (M = 4.15). A high number of teachers expressed strong agreement and agreement with the statement, “My students lack the willingness to practice or improve their English skills due to low self-esteem.” (45% and 35%, respectively). 20% of respondents were unsure about the item. No participants strongly disagreed or disagreed. Therefore, teachers have totally positive attitudes toward this statement.

In item B2: “My students often don’t pay attention during English speaking class,” when the levels “strongly agree” and “agree” were merged into one criterion “agree,” the total result would be 80% (16/20), in comparison with 15% (3/20) of the teachers who are still undecided about their choice. Only one participant (5%) chose disagreeable options. No participants chose strongly disagreeing options. As a result, most teachers found he majority of the time, their kids might not pay attention in the English-speaking class.

For item B3 received a high mean score of 4.15, corresponding to a standard deviation of .671, out of 17 teachers who agreed (11 agreeing and 6 strongly agreeing). This was attributed to the fact that “Students made so much noise that teachers in other classes complained when I do speaking activities in my class.” Three respondents, out of twenty, were still unsure of the question’s response. None of the participants chose the

disagreeing or strongly disagreeing options. The percentage that best reflected teachers’ overall opinions about the internal factors was 85%.

For items B4 and B7, the same mean scores of these two items were calculated (M = 4.20). When the levels “strongly agree” and “agree” were combined into one criterion, “agree” the total result would be 90% for “strongly agree” and 90% for “Some of my students expressed hesitation when I suggested they practice their English because they were afraid, they would make errors.” And “Students exhibit low motivation to learn English, frequently expressing that they find studying English challenging.” Respectively. Only two teachers from B4 and two from B7 experienced underperformance. Put another way, the participants understood that their students were frequently afraid to make mistakes and lacked motivation during practice speaking sessions.

Considering B5 received a mean score of 3.95, corresponding with a standard deviation of .686, out of 15 teachers who agreed (11 agreeing and 4 strongly agreeing), This was attributed to the fact that “My students are passive, low participation, and always wait for the teacher to tell them the answers and to give examples in learning speaking skill.” Five respondents, out of twenty, were still unsure of the question’s response. No one showed disagreement with this opinion. From the data analysis, it was evident that most teachers had positive attitudes toward students’ less participation during English-speaking class.

The descriptive data for item B6, “Students lack confidence so they can’t talk in front of the class.” showed a mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation of .759. Among 20 teachers in total, 6 of them strongly agreed, 9 students agreed, and 5 were neutral with item B5. No one showed disagreement with this opinion. Based on the gathered data, it can be inferred that a greater proportion of teachers concur that students lack confidence so they can’t talk in front of the class in learning speaking skills.

External Problems Towards Teachers’ Difficulties

Table 4.8 Descriptive statistics of teachers’ difficulties with External problems

Item	Statements	N	M	Std. D		SD	D	N	A	SA
C1	I cannot control students’ practice time continuously and regularly because of the lack of regular practice time for students.	20	4.00	1.076	F	0	3	2	7	8
					P	0	15	10	35	40
C2	The class size is too large. So, It is impossible for controlling the large class.	20	4.10	.968	F	0	1	5	5	9
					P	0	5	25	25	45
C3	All classes are mixed ability: students are at different points in their language learning, have different learning strengths and different intelligences.	20	4.40	1.046	F	1	0	2	4	13
					P	5	0	10	20	65
C4	My classes are only 45 minutes long, which impacts the students’ practice speaking skills. Due to the limited time, I only provide feedback to a select few students.	20	4.10	.852	F	0	0	6	6	8
					P	0	0	30	30	40
C5	The exams my students have to take focus on correct grammar, so that’s what we focus on in class. I know I’m not teaching my students English, but teaching them to pass an exam in English.	20	3.90	1.071	F	0	3	3	7	7
					P	0	15	15	35	35
C6	The arrangement of tables and chairs in the classroom hinders students from participating in interactive activities.	20	4.00	.725	F	0	1	2	13	4
					P	0	5	10	65	20
Valid N (listwise)		20								

(Note: N=Number M = Mean; Std. D= Standard Deviation; F=Frequency; P= Percentage)

Firstly, as for item C1, it demonstrated that most of the teachers (7/20 teachers agree and 8/20 strongly agree) found teachers cannot control students’ practice time continuously and regularly because of the lack of regular practice time for students. Only three teachers disagreed on this item, and two respondents were undecided. As a result, the mean score for this item was 4.00, with a standard deviation of 1.076.

Taking into account C2 item “The class size is too large. So, it is impossible to control the large class.” C2 had a mean score of 4.10 with a standard deviation of .968. Out of the twenty teachers, nine strongly agreed (45%), five agreed (25%), five were undercut (25%), and only one disagreed (5%) with the statement. Nobody expressed strong disagreement with this viewpoint. The data analysis made it clear that the class size is too large, which makes it difficult to manage the class, leading to difficulties for teachers in the process of teaching speaking skills.

Item C3 received the highest mean score of 4.40, corresponding to a standard deviation of 1.046, out of 17 teachers who agreed (4 agreeing and 13 strongly agreeing). This was attributed to the fact that “All classes are

mixed ability: students are at different points in their language learning, have different learning strengths and different intelligences.”. Only two respondents, out of twenty, were still strong agreeing of the question’s response. The percentage that best reflected teachers’ overall opinions about the number of multi-level students in the class was 85%.

Item C4 received a high mean score of 4.10, corresponding with the standard deviation of .852 in this construct, out of the 14 teachers who agreed (6 agreeing and 8 strongly agreeing). This was due to the fact that limited time affects a student’s practice speaking skills and provide feedback. Merely 6 out of 20 participants expressed uncertainty regarding the response to the query. 70% was the percentage that best reflected teachers’ overall opinions about the disadvantages of time in learning speaking skills.

The descriptive data for item C5 showed a mean of 3.9 and a standard deviation of 1.071. Regarding the examinations, which are currently focused on grammar, writing, and reading comprehension, the percentages of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement were, respectively, 7 and 7. Three teachers raised an objection to the statement, while three teachers (15%) did not decide. The gathered data indicates that a greater proportion of teachers agree that they focus on accurate grammar in class because their pupils are required to take examinations that emphasize this topic. It is clear to me that she or he is not teaching my children English; rather, she or he is teaching them how to pass an English examination.

With regard to issue C6, of the twenty participants, 4 teachers strongly agreed and 13 agreed (20% and 65%, respectively). Combining two levels of “agree” and “strongly agree” into a single “agree” level resulted in a total of 85%, which was significantly higher than the percentage of respondents who disagreed (5%) and were unsure (10%) about the reason. It implied that the arrangement of tables and chairs in class prevents students from joining interactive activities. This leads to challenges for teachers when instructing students in speaking English. As a result, Item D6 had a quite high mean score ($M = 4.0$) and a 7.725 standard deviation.

The themes and codes obtained from the qualitative data as list in table 4.20 was described in order to know English teachers’ difficulties in teaching speaking students at ABC School. It was divided into four difficulties consisting of Linguistic problems, Internal problems, External Problems, and Teaching methods.

Linguistic problems

Based on data obtained from the interview, it was found that some difficulties faced by English teachers in teaching students at ABC School was linguistic problems during teaching and learning process, the teacher mentioned that she had trouble teaching her students to speak English since they often utilized their mother tongue (Vietnamese) while communicating. When she requested the students practice their English with their partners, they often lacked the vocabulary to express anything in English, so they spoke in their own language. Another instructor said in the description above that practically all children have a very limited vocabulary. Vocabulary has a vital function in language. Learning to read, talk, write, and listen requires a strong vocabulary as well. Students who lack an adequate vocabulary are unable to properly communicate and express themselves. Students who learn vocabulary will be able to talk, write, read, and listen more easily. The instructor must have difficulties while teaching pronunciation, assessing pupils, or providing feedback. This is where the teacher’s role comes into play; by understanding and overcoming any existing issues, the goal of pronunciation instruction may be met.

Internal problems

The teacher assumed that the students have obstacles when speaking English; they are shy, lack confidence, and have different interests. One of the barriers to a student speaking in front of a class is a lack of confidence. Students who are worried of making errors struggle to speak in class. They are still shy and scared. Verma et al. (2016) present the first problem, which is the influence of self-confidence on academic achievement in primary school. They discovered that self-confidence may impact students’ academic accomplishment depending on low and high degrees of self-confidence, and their research indicated that academic performance was considerably greater among low- and high-confident students. It shows that there is a difference. This hypothesis is relevant to the difficulties encountered by English instructors. Confidence is the most critical aspect of learning English; hence, a lack of confidence might impede the learning process for young learners. Another problem is that students may feel nervous, which reduces their enthusiasm to participate in speaking activities. Students are never fully prepared to talk; they require time to consider vocabulary and structure. They are terrified of making errors because their buddies would make fun of them. This makes it difficult for instructors to help children enhance their speaking skills. Besides, the teacher assumed that the students did not have motivation to speak English because the majority of students gave less attention to the teacher during the teaching and learning process. Motivation is the key to success in learning the target language. Students’ motivation to learn has a positive impact on learning acquisition. “Motivation is an important component that cannot be separated in the teaching and learning process, especially in foreign language learning.” (Amalya, Nadina & Ma’rifatulloh, Sayid, 2022). The strongest relationship between motivation to learn and the study’s results is significant. Therefore, if students lack motivation, it can lead to difficulties for teachers when teaching speech.

External Problems

Five respondent instructors mentioned several issues relating to external concerns that teachers face while teaching speaking skills. One instructor emphasized the difficulties in getting children to speak English because of the big class size, which made individual attention difficult. Another instructor emphasized the lack of time to monitor the class, offer feedback, and address each student’s needs. Furthermore, the pupils’ varied abilities, with different levels of language competency and learning skills, make effective instruction even more difficult. The existing table layout was also noted as a hindrance, making it difficult to plan speaking activities. Furthermore, the majority of students lacked the initiative to develop their English-speaking skills, often neglecting to complete homework and practice outside of class. These external obstacles, taken together, reduce the efficiency of teaching speaking skills in the classroom.

In a speaking class, teachers said they didn’t have enough time to guide all students, so they knew what to do. The average number of students in such a class falls between 30 and 45, and the time for a speaking class is 45 minutes per period. Time is needed for students to learn a new topic and its requirements. In that case, they encountered numerous difficulties with vocabulary, structure, grammar, and other related areas. That’s why teachers need a lot of time to help them. Thus, in many cases, the class almost ended just when students figured out what they were going to say. Otherwise, teachers could only provide guidance to some students and then compel them to finish within the required time, a method that proved to be ineffective. In addition, class administration takes a long time due to the enormous number of pupils.

In addition, the number of students in the class is too high. Therefore, it is not practicable to exercise control over such a vast class. This impacts the pupils’ overall learning experience.

Teaching Methods Problems

Data from the interview revealed that teaching methods were the primary cause of some difficulties English teachers at ABC School faced when teaching speaking. The teacher mentioned several challenges: Choosing appropriate materials: The teacher had difficulty selecting resources suitable for the students’ age, as their ability to speak English was still developing. Research by Richards (2001) suggests that age-appropriate and proficiency-aligned materials are crucial for effective language learning (Richards, 2001). Finding new methods and activities: The teacher struggled to discover new methods or intriguing activities to help students practice and engage in lessons. According to Harmer (2007), incorporating diverse and interactive activities can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Creating suitable activities: The teacher found it challenging to create suitable activities, control the classroom, and involve all students in speaking activities. Classroom management and student participation are essential aspects of effective teaching, as highlighted by Marzano (2003). Determining suitable methods: The teacher had difficulty deciding which methods would suit the material and adapt to the students’ characteristics. Differentiated instruction can help address the diverse needs and learning styles of students (Tomlinson, 2001).

What efforts are you making to minimize these problems?

Every issue or difficulty needs a resolution. A solution refers to a resolution or an effective means of resolving an issue. In this forum, academics will explore strategies to address the difficulties that instructors have while instructing young learners in speaking skills. According to the findings of an interview carried out by researchers at ABC School, certain difficulties encountered by instructors were recognized and addressed, and potential ways to overcome these obstacles were also examined. After analyzing the data from the interview, the writer found some ways to minimize the difficulties English teachers face in teaching speaking skills. The themes and codes were listed from the analysis of qualitative data obtained from the interview in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 Themes and codes of English teachers to minimize difficulties in teaching speaking skills to sixth grade students.

Themes	Codes
Linguistic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher mentioned that to overcome these obstacles, the students lack vocabulary. She usually asks her students to memorize vocabulary, which she checks on a regular basis. - The teacher said that she utilizes flashcards for regular practice vocabulary. Incorporate digital tools like Quizlet, Bamboozle, or Anki for interactive learning.
Internal problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher assumed that the students lacked participation in shorter or limited responses. In order to tackle these issues, the teacher typically utilizes the Total Physical Response approach (TPR), a teaching method commonly employed by educators, especially when instructing younger students. This approach incorporates linguistic or vocabulary ideas into physical gestures

	<p>that respond to vocal information. Students who only use a few responses boost their learning motivation to advance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher assumed that the students had a shy personality and lacked confidence. To overcome these obstacles, she usually uses games, visual aids, relatable topics, or examples that make all passive students become active. - The teacher stated that regardless of the challenges she faced were building students' confidence, overcoming a lack of experience, and improving their understanding of the issue. To overcome these difficulties, she employs group activities that encourage kids to assemble and connect with one another.
External Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers believe that integrating speaking into all other skills is the only way to minimize these external difficulties and ensure continuous speaking practice for students.
Teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher said that she had difficulty in choosing materials that were appropriate for the age of the students, because the students' ability to speak English was still lacking. To minimize that the teacher will conduct initial assessments to understand students' proficiency levels. Utilize this data to choose or modify the materials appropriately. - The teacher said that to minimize difficult to find new methods or interesting activities. She tries to expand her knowledge of speaking topics, She will attend workshops and training sessions focused on speaking skills. Utilize resources such as textbooks, online courses, and educational blogs to stay updated on new methods and topics. - Collaborate with Colleagues: Work with other teachers to share ideas and resources. Peer observations can provide new insights into effective teaching strategies.

Linguistic problems

All of the instructors do the same thing, which is to advise the students to remember vocabulary in order to increase the students' vocabulary. Memorizing is something that a lot of people who are learning a language desire to become better at.

Internal problems

Kayi (2006) says the second language production of English sounds, patterns, word choice, sentence stress, intonation, and rhythms have various meanings. When children had trouble speaking, body movements helped them employ whole phrases instead of just a few words. The teacher usually tells students to raise their voices when they say unclear or low sentences, but if young learners' pitches remain unclear or small, the teacher will immediately sing loudly so that all students can sing along fiercely. Other ways the instructor provides examples for children who only speak one or two words and don't utilize entire sentences include imitating animals, such as "it's a monkey," or presenting objects related to vocabulary terms, such as "it's a table." From there, young learners learn sentence structure. Teachers employ the Total Physical Response Method (TPR) to instruct young learners. Responding to verbal instruction with physical motions employs language or vocabulary ideas. Imitating the process by which young learners acquire their native language reduces student inhibitions and tension. Young learners can easily remember the phrases they study.

Confidence is the most critical component of learning English. In this case, the instructors reported that they overcame the first barrier of lack of confidence by combining active kids with children who were not active or lacked confidence, allowing them to collaborate while active peers assisted or guided. Friends who are not as active or confident become outstanding. In the classroom, the instructors divide the pupils into groups based on their level of activity. Many pupils desire to connect and participate in learning. If there are children in my class who lack confidence, the instructors will engage in activities that drain their energy, such as playing while studying in class or singing and dancing. When kids participate in these activities, those who are shy tend to open up and communicate with their peers. Teachers utilized the same strategy to solve the problem, inviting young learners to play in a group with the goal of increasing their self-confidence. As a result, individuals may indirectly engage in activities with their friends without feeling ashamed or afraid.

External problems

To tackle the issue of inconsistent practice time for students in enhancing their English-speaking abilities, instructors might include numerous strategies both inside and outside the classroom. Utilizing in-class strategies, such as starting and concluding classes with brief oral exercises and integrating interactive activities like debates and role-plays, provide consistent opportunities for speaking practice. Utilizing technology via

language learning applications and online speaking platforms outside of the classroom might provide supplementary chances for practice. To enhance practice time, it is beneficial to create English-speaking groups and assign speaking-related homework activities, such as filming videos or conducting interviews. In addition, cultivating a nurturing classroom atmosphere and offering ongoing, constructive comments may inspire students and facilitate their progress. By integrating these methods, educators may provide a more uniform and captivating structure for learners to improve their English oral skills, even in the face of limited opportunities for regular practice.

Teaching methods.

After interviews were conducted, teachers themselves recognize that their understanding of speaking topics is limited, and their approach to teaching is passive, lacking creativity and interest. To address these issues, they intend to participate in seminars and training sessions focused on speaking skills, aiming to expand their understanding of speaking themes. Additionally, they will make use of resources such as textbooks, online courses, and educational blogs in order to keep themselves up to speed on new approaches and topics within the field of speaking. Additionally, it is essential to engage with other educators; participating in peer observations and working together with other educators to exchange ideas and resources may give useful insights into good teaching practices. To make sure the materials are appropriate for the students’ skills, they’ll first assess their competence. They will then use this information to pick or alter the materials in a manner that is appropriate. By combining collaborative efforts, continual professional growth, and personalized material selection, they successfully handle the obstacles associated with teaching speaking skills.

Students’ interview

Interviews were conducted with 5 students. These students were selected from previously surveyed classes, had different English proficiency levels, and encountered different difficulties in the process of learning to speak English in class. Each person has 10 minutes to answer two main questions.

What are difficulties in learning speaking skills?

Table 4.22 Themes and codes of English student’ difficulties in learning speaking skills

Themes	Codes
Linguistic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students mentioned that when speaking English, we often forget vocabulary to use in that context. - Students said that they have difficulty pronouncing English correctly. - Students mentioned that they often have difficulty with grammar while speaking English. For instance, they frequently overlook the use of the past tense when describing an action that has already occurred, and when speaking in the present continuous, they frequently forget to use the verb “be.”
Internal problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students assumed that they were not confident enough to communicate with English teachers. They worry about receiving negative feedback if they make a mistake. If they do communicate, they use only actions, body language, or single words. - Students have said that they often feel nervous and that their hearts beat fast when invited by teachers to speak in front of the class, conduct a dialogue, or give a presentation to the class.
External problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students stated that they want to practice speaking English with my classmates, but they often say, ‘No, or I’m busy’. - Students said that they had difficulty finding outside environments to practice speaking English regularly.

Almost all interviewees agreed that they face various problems while learning how to speak. One important challenge is lack of vocabulary. Restricted vocabulary might impede their capacity to communicate effectively and accurately.

“... My biggest difficulty is the lack of vocabulary and grammar.”

or

“I am struggling with vocabulary. It is too hard to memorize more vocabulary because lack of practice in listening, reading, writing, and speaking activity”.

Pronouncing English words is the second difficulty that pupils face while speaking English. The ability to pronounce words correctly might sometimes make it difficult for them to communicate in English. According to the interview results, 4/5 of respondents acknowledged having difficulty accurately pronouncing English

words. This trait is strongly linked to non-linguistic elements such as anxiety and shyness. Students who are unable to pronounce words correctly may not be able to communicate in English. One respondent stated this after the interview. *“I’m having trouble pronouncing words correctly. I believe that competent English speakers are those who speak clearly and correctly pronounced words. Speaking correctly and with strong pronunciation demonstrates an individual’s English competency.”* This demonstrates that incorrect pronunciation is one of the challenges pupils faces while speaking English. Another respondent, when questioned about pronunciation, said the following: *“Pronunciation is important to help us understand the spoken language, but it is very difficult to learn how to pronounce the word correctly.”*

Grammar is a fundamental component of the ability to speak English. Grammar is the principle that governs the traditional structure and connection of words in a sentence. The ability to construct a grammatically accurate statement reveals the identity of the speaker. The collected statistics show that language grammar is a contributing issue that impedes pupils’ ability to speak English. Hence, the proportion is elevated. It is slightly greater than half. The respondents express their lack of knowledge on the right way to structure a well-formed sentence in the English language. They acknowledged that English had a distinct linguistic structure or grammar in contrast to Vietnamese. One participant asserts the following: *“Grammar is crucial, but I am encountering difficulties in understanding the complicated rules of English grammar.”* I lack proficiency in English due to my limited understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and proper pronunciation”. English and Vietnamese have distinct grammatical structures.

Many students struggle with confidence when it comes to communicating in English, especially with their teachers. They often assume they are not proficient enough to engage in dialogue, fearing that any mistakes they make will be met with negative feedback. As a result, these students may default to using only nonverbal communication like gestures and single-word responses, rather than speaking up. Students have voiced that they experience significant anxiety when asked to participate orally in class, describing feelings of nervousness and a racing heartbeat when called upon to speak in front of their peers or have a conversation with the teacher. This apprehension stems from a lack of self-assurance in their English abilities and a concern that their imperfect language skills will be judged harshly. Helping students build their confidence and comfort with English communication, while also fostering a supportive classroom environment, will be key to encouraging more active verbal participation.

Furthermore, during the process of learning English, students said that they had difficulty discussing in groups with their peers. *“...I want to practice speaking English with my classmates, but they often say that ‘No or I’m busy’”*. Most of the group only talked in their mother tongue and rarely used English during the discussion. Besides, they tend to think in their mother tongue before translating them into English.

What efforts are you making to minimize these problems?

Table 4.23 The students’ responses and the solutions they provided to overcome their difficulties in learning English-speaking skills.

Interview	Responses/Solutions
Lack of Responses	Most students had no solutions to the difficulties they mentioned.
Speaking Courses	A few students signed up for speaking courses at English centers or online with foreign teachers to practice English-speaking skills.
Vocabulary Learning	Students intend to learn and use the vocabulary taught by their teachers in class.
Group Practice	Some students practice speaking through discussions or exchanges when working in groups with classmates.

Almost students had no responses when they were asked whether they had come up with any solutions regarding the difficulties they mentioned. Only few of them said, *“I often sign up for speaking courses at English centers or online courses with foreign teachers to practice my English-speaking skills.”* They believe that the purpose of these courses is to enhance their English-speaking abilities. They will acquire the vocabulary taught by their teachers in class. *“I will learn the vocabulary that the teacher taught in class.”* One participant stated that *“I will try to practice speaking through discussion or exchange when working in groups with my classmates.”*

Summary of findings

This section of the research aims to summarize the findings above. This section presents the findings of the survey and interview questionnaires for teachers and students. After studying and analyzing this point, the author realized that both teachers and students face major difficulties and how they minimize these difficulties.

In addition, the table presents the mean scores of the survey questions. Regarding the difficulties of learners and teachers, it was reported that the results were positive. Following the discovery of the results, the research delved into the primary challenges faced by teachers and students during the teaching and learning of speaking skills in a classroom. In the upcoming section, we will present some of the solutions that teachers and students believe will enhance the teaching and learning of speaking skills.

Discussions of findings

This chapter discusses the major problems that ABC teachers and students face when teaching and learning English-speaking skills. Based on the analysis of questionnaires and interview for both teachers and students at ABC, we could see that both teachers and students were deeply aware of the importance of speaking skills. This was primarily due to the numerous challenges they faced. This chapter also discussed other approaches considered by teachers and students to improve the quality of teaching and learning speaking English. The researcher generally categorized them based on the following factors: there are linguistic, internal problems, lecturer’s teaching method-related, and external problems.

Research question 1: What are the main difficulties encountered by the teachers and students when teaching and learning speaking skills in a class?

The main teachers’ difficulties

The purpose of this study was to document ABC teachers’ difficulties in teaching English. We categorized overarching themes and sub-themes, including: (1) linguistic problems (students’ lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of using their mother tongue); (2) internal problems (students often exhibit low self-esteem, poor attention spans, passive behavior, excessive noise, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation.); (3) external problems (the lack of regular practice time, the class size, the time limit, the exams, the arrangement of tables and chairs, and mixed student’s level); (4) teaching method (restricted knowledge, determining the method and material, finding intriguing activities, and designing assessments). In the following section, we present and explain these themes related to ABC teachers’ difficulties in teaching speaking English.

Table 4.24 Themes and sub-themes of ABC Teachers’ challenges in teaching speaking.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Linguistic problems	<i>Students lack:</i> vocabulary
	grammar
	pronunciation
	the habit of using their mother tongue
Internal problems	<i>Students often:</i> exhibit low self-esteem
	don’t pay attention
	made so much noise
	are fear of making mistakes
	are passive—low participation
	lack confidence
	are low motivation
External problems	the lack of regular practice time
	the class size
	the time limit
	the exams
	the arrangement of tables and chairs
Teaching method	mixed student’s level
	restricted knowledge
	determining the method and material
	finding intriguing activities
	designing assessments

Linguistic problems

The questionnaire and interview analysis revealed four types of linguistic characteristics that represented difficulties in teaching EFL speaking: students’ lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, and pronunciation issues, in addition to the teacher’s difficulty in training students to speak English, as they frequently used their native language (Vietnamese) in speaking lessons. The results of this study corroborate the earlier investigation conducted by Abrar, Mukhlash & Mukminin, Amirul & Habibi, Akhmad & Asyraf, Fadhil & Makmur, Makmur & Marzulina, Lenny (2018), which identified vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar as three out of the four linguistic characteristics that pose challenges in teaching English speaking. In their research, fluency is the fourth element of the linguistic characteristic that represents the difficulties in teaching EFL speaking. The fourth factor,

according to the researcher, is the habit of using students' mother tongue, which causes difficulties for teachers. Why is there such a difference? Firstly, Lenny Marzulina's research focuses on a university teacher at one public university who struggles with a second-year university student majoring in English, whereas the subject of this study is a middle school teacher.

According to the data gathered, a substantial portion (70%) of the teacher body agreed that their students lack the vocabulary to speak English. The viewpoints of our participants clearly revealed that a restricted vocabulary, to some extent, impeded students' ability to speak English actively and smoothly. Lexical knowledge is the extent of a language learner's vocabulary (Burns, 2017). Acquiring an adequate vocabulary is critical for improving students' ability to comprehend and use language effectively, both in terms of receptive and productive abilities (Cahyono & Widiati, 2008). Vocabulary refers to the suitable diction that is utilized. Any individual who does not possess an adequate vocabulary is incapable of engaging in active communication or expressing their thoughts in either verbal or written form. Learners are sometimes prevented from learning a language because they have a restricted vocabulary, which is another obstacle. As a result, instructors of foreign languages have to have a substantial amount of understanding about how to manage a dynamic classroom in order to ensure that students accomplish a great deal of success in their vocabulary acquisition. All participants stated that students' lack of vocabulary had become the primary issue, resulting in a number of issues in teaching methods, including the students' inability to answer to the instructors' queries and a lack of confidence while speaking English. They also stated that this aspect hindered instructors' capacity to communicate in English throughout the teaching and learning process. The findings suggest that a shortage in students' vocabulary results in reduced motivation in the learning environment for both EFL instructors and learners. This is because it restricts the teachers' ability to employ English-only instruction in the classroom, since students are unable to respond to their teachers' questions. Tanaka (2017) previously highlighted this aspect when examining the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan.

Within the theme of linguistic problems, the researcher discovered that pronunciation is another language competency that EFL teachers find challenging to address when teaching speaking. The teacher said that it was difficult to teach correct pronunciation due to the students' natural skills and her pupils are terrified of pronouncing a word incorrectly; therefore, they speak it in a low or unclear voice. Barker and Murphy (2011) previously proposed that in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) setting, it is crucial to increase learners' knowledge of the diverse range of accents while improving pronunciation skills. In addition to a lack of awareness, the instructors in this research should enhance their pedagogical understanding of pronunciation. When it comes to studying English, pronunciation is a very crucial factor. Therefore, to ensure understanding, individuals must accurately pronounce their words in the English language. Pronunciation presents a significant challenge for students, as they have grown up speaking their mother tongue. There is also a significant difference between the pronunciation system of the Vietnamese language and that of the English language. The disparities between the sound systems of English and other languages are the root cause of the widespread difficulty that people have while trying to learn English pronunciation.

Furthermore, seventy-five percent of teachers under treatment chose "agree" (60% teachers agreed and 15% strongly agreed) doing the questionnaire believed that their students often encounter difficulties rooted from the inability to use the selected grammatical structures that were introduced in the lessons of Global Success 6. According to Kontogeorgou, K., & Zafiri, M. (2016, February) "students have the greatest difficulty in expressing themselves in the language taught and communication in the target language is the aspect that they fear most of all and it is this fact that makes them feel stressed and insecure." Much research has been conducted to teach grammar with the goal of utilizing language in natural interactions with competent speakers, since grammar offers a set of rules for the structure of the language. Grammar training should be divided into three areas: grammar as rules, grammar as form, and grammar as a resource (Murtisari et al., 2020). Additionally, "in building interactions, sometimes students are more comfortable speaking using native language" and "students who don't have basic English language have a bit of difficulty in the process of teaching speaking because they are used to use their native language, so they don't understand grammar and need time to make students understand the material."

The findings of the study are consistent with those of other studies in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) (Al-Hosni, 2014; Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013; Arju, 2011; Keong et al., 2015; Priyanto, 2013; Paakki, 2013; Wang & Roopchund, 2015). These studies indicate that the challenges faced by EFL/ESL learners in oral communication or engaging in conversation can be attributed to a lack of linguistic competence and/or proficiency. EFL learners' limited vocabulary, native language interference, pronunciation challenges, and grammatical issues impede their fluency and eloquence in speaking the language.

Possible explanations for the complaints concerning speaking difficulties supposedly rooted in grammar and vocabulary. It might be inferred that teachers have not taught students set expressions (citations) found in language functions, for instance. In addition, teachers should raise students' awareness about conversation and speech strategies. For example, to check the audience's understanding of the topic delivered, students may simply

ask, “OK, so far?” Therefore, if students are equipped with set expressions and strategies, the frequency of the difficulty complaints will diminish.

Internal problems

In addition to linguistic barriers, our findings led to a theme of internal problems. Internal were another significant challenge that teachers faced when teaching speaking skills in this study. The thematic analysis revealed seven main internal factors impacting teachers’ ability to teach English effectively: students often exhibit low self-esteem, poor attention spans, passive behavior, excessive noise, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation.

The results of this study corroborate the earlier investigation conducted by Ahmed (2016) investigated the “Problems and Difficulties of Speaking that Encounter English Language Students at Al Quds Open University”. The findings revealed that the students had difficulties with their speaking abilities, mostly due to factors such as fear of making errors, shyness, nervousness, and a lack of confidence. A widely accepted notion is that students often experience a loss of confidence when they become aware that their discussion partners are misunderstanding them or when they themselves fail to grasp other speakers. In this case, the pupils choose to remain quiet while others engage in conversation, indicating a lack of confidence in their communication abilities. According to Tsui cited Nunan (1999) argues that students who lack confidence in themselves and their English skills have communication fears. This demonstrates that fostering pupils’ confidence is a crucial aspect of a teacher’s primary responsibility. Consequently, the instructor must acquire knowledge from both theoretical frameworks and hands-on experience in order to effectively cultivate the pupils’ self-confidence. In addition, motivation plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of students’ learning (Songsiri, 2007). Nunan (1999) emphasizes that motivation plays a crucial role in students’ willingness to speak English, since it might influence their reluctance to do so. Motivation plays a crucial role in assessing the readiness of learners to engage in communication. Zua (2008) further asserts that motivation is an intrinsic force. She asserts that learners’ interest in studying will increase regardless of the types of incentives they receive. Many studies have shown that students with a strong passion to succeed may persevere in learning and get higher grades than those with a lesser motivation to succeed, demonstrating that strengthening students’ motivation to learn is critical for all teachers.

Students made so much noise that teachers in other classes complained when English teachers do speaking activities in my class. Noise in the classroom, particularly during speaking activities, presents substantial issues for instructors and may result in complaints from colleagues in neighboring classrooms. According to research, excessive noise affects both teaching and learning settings. Schmidt (1992) underlines how excessive noise may annoy instructors and reduce educational efficiency. Gump (1987) emphasizes how environmental issues such as noise affect classroom management and raise teacher stress. Shield and Dockrell (2003) discovered that noise interferes with verbal communication and focus, which are important during speaking activities. Klatte et al. (2010) also state that poor acoustic circumstances may impair instruction, whereas Maxwell and Evans (2000) contend that noise pollution adds to teacher stress and burnout. These results highlight the importance of efficient noise control measures for increasing teaching efficiency and improving the overall classroom experience.

On the other hand, Ur (2000) mentions four main problems with getting students to speak a foreign language in the classroom. The first one is the student’s inhibition to participate in class because of feelings of shyness, fear, stress, and anxiety. The second problem arises when students find it difficult to express themselves or remain silent due to boredom with the class topic. The next issue to take into account is low or uneven participation. This issue arises in large class settings where students often lack sufficient time to engage in conversation or in situations where one student dominates the group’s discussion of the mother tongue. Some students tend to use their mother tongue both outside and inside the classroom because they feel more comfortable and less exposed to the target language. Due to a lack of vocabulary in the target language, students often borrow words from their native language, potentially contributing to a lack of engagement in classes that could stimulate learners’ motivation.

External problems

A third theme developed from our data analysis was external problems. In this theme, we found six consistent issues (the lack of regular practice time, class size, the time limit, the exams, the arrangement of tables and chairs, and mixed students’ levels in a class) that cause teachers’ difficulties in teaching speaking. The findings of the study are consistent with Dina A. Al-Jamal1 and Ghadeer A. Al-Jamal2 (2013). They conducted research on the challenges encountered by undergraduate students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in speaking skills. The research identified many prominent challenges, including those related to communication in the native language (L1), managing large class sizes, and limited time availability.

Some educators are of the opinion that there is insufficient time for pupils to engage in continuous and consistent practice due to the fact that the number of classes that are scheduled each week is restricted. Richards

(2018) examines the difficulties associated with instructing speaking abilities, highlighting the constraint of limited class time that hampers the chance for substantial practice in communicating, which is crucial for acquiring language.

Besides, class size is one of the important factors affecting their professional experience (Shamin & Coleman, 2018). Some teachers said that she was difficult to control the students to speak English because the class size is too large. Large classes are considered to be another factor affecting the teaching process of English-speaking skills. Teachers faced a lot of problems in such a large class. Firstly, discipline was an issue of concern. Teachers had difficulty teaching when the learners were noisy, inattentive, poorly behaved, or simply out of control, e.g., fighting in class, teasing each other, etc. This violation of the class regulations took a significant amount of time for the teachers to resolve, which in turn slowed down the pace of the lesson. The problem of class size has been a challenge for EFL instructors in this research, since larger classes create difficulties in managing the classroom effectively (Ramdani & Rahmat, 2018). According to Shamin and Coleman (2018) concluded from their research on English speaking acquisition that there is a strong correlation between big class sizes and the emotional stress, physical tiredness, and professional dissatisfaction experienced by instructors. Furthermore, they argued that class size was a significant determinant affecting instructors' professional experience. Hence, the professionalism and emotions of instructors are interconnected with the presence of big class sizes, hence impacting their teaching efficacy (Korucu Kis & Kartal, 2019).

Another constraint was that the teachers had to work with the students for each 45-minute period. Many teachers complained that a 45-minute lesson was too short for students to discuss the textbook topics in depth after receiving instructions from the teachers. At that time, they had to help the students complete the new lesson, review what they had learned, and prepare for the written tests. The lack of classroom time not only necessitates extra effort and time from the teachers, but it also leads to a problem of methodology—the implementation of the grammar-translation approach by most ABC teachers. In such a short period of class time, it is not permissible to allow students to speak more and ask them more referential questions, as this would result in incomplete teaching material, whereas more teacher talk would save more time. Usually, teachers are overburdened and hesitant to engage in such activities.

According to the questionnaire replies, a major problem has been identified: the disparity between language instruction aims and standardized test needs. The tests that students must take highlight accurate grammar, forcing professors to concentrate primarily on grammar training in their lectures. As a consequence, instructors believe they are preparing their pupils to pass tests based on grammatical precision rather than training them to utilize English as a functional and communicative tool. Knight, Ben (1992) "Speaking skills are often considered the most important part of an EFL course, and yet the difficulties in testing oral skills frequently lead teachers into using inadequate oral tests or even not testing speaking skills at all." The present assessments primarily emphasize grammar, writing, and reading comprehension. Consequently, the instructors prioritized instructing those specific components. The instructors' perspective in this case may be accurate, since they have successfully fulfilled their pupils' wishes. Most students prioritize achieving high test scores or passing admission tests. The existing testing system fails to promote English language proficiency via communicative practice, since it only relies on written assessments and does not prioritize the development of communication skills. The primary motivation for pupils to acquire English language skills is to successfully get high scores on examinations. Hence, it is important to enhance the students' desire to acquire proficiency in the English language. The improvement of the testing system is an exceedingly effective option.

The arrangement of tables and chairs in the classroom may have a considerable influence on instructors' capacity to conduct successful speaking exercises, posing a variety of obstacles. Several scholars investigated the impact of classroom arrangement on teaching and learning processes. Weinstein, C. S. (1979) explores how classroom design, including furniture placement, influences student conduct and instructor performance. Weinstein emphasizes that badly organized classrooms might impede connection and communication, which are required for speaking activities.

In addition, ABC School students are at different levels. Although large and multi-level classes have their own advantages, such as providing a richer pool of human resources or bringing educational value to real contact between different kinds of people, they are major challenges for teachers. In these classes, teachers face significant challenges in organizing activities, maintaining class control, and monitoring every student. A good English proficiency student does not want to work with a low level of English proficiency in activities that require pairing work. They will soon be bored, if required. When learning in such classes, only good and talkative students take advantage of the opportunity to raise their voices. At the same time, there is not enough treatment, compassion, and support for shy and less able students.

Teachers' method

The final theme we developed through our analysis of the data was teaching method. With regard to the difficulties in teachings speaking, we found interrelated sub-themes including: (1) restricted knowledge; (2)

determining the method and material; (3) finding intriguing activities; and (4) designing assessments. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted. Based on the responses from the questionnaire and interviews, several key difficulties emerged regarding teachers’ experiences in teaching English-speaking skills.

One major obstacle that has been noticed is the lack of expertise in discussing various subjects. Teachers often encounter limitations in the scope of subjects they may cover, which can impede the efficacy of their instructional sessions. This restriction might result in repetitive or uninteresting classes, which do not captivate the students’ attention or encourage active involvement. Expanding the range of courses and including culturally significant issues has the potential to improve student engagement and learning results. Moreover, the study conducted by Rezeki, Putri, and Dalimunte (2024) investigated the challenges encountered by teachers in instructing oral communication skills and the strategies they use to address these obstacles. The data suggest that one of the five primary issues is the instructors’ restricted vocabulary.

Identifying the most suitable teaching methods that cater to both the content and personal characteristics of the pupils presents a distinctive challenge. This implies that instructors might get advantages from professional development opportunities that concentrate on educational practices emphasizing differentiation and adaptation. Workshops, peer observations, and collaborative planning sessions may provide instructors with valuable insights on different instructional approaches and strategies, as well as guidance on how to successfully implement them in a variety of classroom environments. The determination of appropriate content for the capabilities of the pupils is another key problem that must be overcome. It is sometimes challenging for educators to connect the instructional materials they use in their courses with the various levels of skill that exist within those classrooms.

Another difficulty highlighted is the challenge in finding interesting and engaging activities for teaching speaking skills. Teachers expressed that it is often difficult to source or create activities that not only practice speaking but also engage students in a meaningful way every lesson. This indicates a need for more accessible resources and training focused on innovative, interactive, and student-centered speaking activities. Incorporating technology, games, and real-life simulations could provide practical solutions to this issue.

Lastly, designing assessments for young learners’ speaking abilities poses a notable challenge. Teachers find it difficult to create assessments that accurately reflect young learners’ speaking skills and progress. When making tests for young students’ speaking skills, it’s important to think about their stage of growth, emotions, cultural background, and useful ways to keep them interested. It means finding a balance between the need for correct measurements and the need to make a learning setting that is helpful and inspiring for young people. This level of difficulty shows how important it is to use careful and creative methods to test young children’s speaking abilities. “The only method teachers use to assess their students’ speaking skill is through their class participation when they answer the teachers’ questions or when they practice the dialogues given in the textbook. —We assess them when they answer questions and when they ask and answer each other.” (Al Hosni, 2014)

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers showed agreement that factors towards linguistic and internal, external and teaching methods problems are widely recognized as significant obstacles.

The main students’ difficulties

We categorized overarching themes and sub-themes, including: (1) linguistic problems (lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of thinking the mother tongue first); (2) internal problems (afraid of making mistakes, nervous/anxiety, demotivation, lack confidence, and hesitations); (3) external problems (textbooks, peers, lecturers, and environment); (4) teaching method (traditional methods and interact between teacher and student). In the following section, we present and explain these themes related to ABC student’ difficulties in learning speaking English.

Table 4.25 Themes and subthemes of ABC Students’ challenges in learning speaking.

Themes	Sub-Themes
Linguistic problems	vocabulary
	grammar
	pronunciation
	think in Vietnamese-the mother tongue first
Internal problems	afraid of making mistakes
	nervous / anxiety
	demotivation
	lack confidence
	hesitations
External problems	textbooks
	peers
	environment
Teaching method	traditional methods
	interact between teacher and student

Linguistic problems

All of the participants mentioned to us that they have enjoyed learning English since they were in elementary school, and several of them even acknowledged that English is their love. However, they found it challenging to communicate in the language because it necessitates knowledge of linguistic components. In respect to this issue, our participants were challenged by vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and think in Vietnamese-the mother tongue first, all of which hindered their ability to speak English. The previous study had discussed challenges in speaking skills with its strategies from teacher perspectives. According to Al-Esaifer and AlShareef (2018), the common challenges of speaking faced by the students are mother tongue and linguistic, for example, vocabulary.

Regarding linguistic problems, the most common issues that most students face are: (1) difficulties in using correct vocabulary; (2) poor pronunciation; (3) difficulties in using correct grammatical structures; and (4) the tendency to think in Vietnamese, the mother tongue.

Every participant said that their primary worry while attempting to speak English was vocabulary. They acknowledged their poor vocabulary and said that when speaking English, they often have difficulties in using correct vocabulary or forget vocabulary to use in that context. Our participants' viewpoints clearly revealed that a restricted vocabulary, to some extent, impeded their ability to speak English actively and fluently. Hetrakul (1995) supports the findings up to this point, arguing that it is challenging for students learning a foreign language to express their thoughts in the target language. This is especially true if they have only a limited understanding of the linguistic aspects of the target language. It is common for them to not speak the target language because they do not have a sufficient vocabulary and lack confidence. In spite of the fact that they are confident in their ability to communicate, if they do not possess an adequate vocabulary or diction, they will face significant difficulties when speaking English. Other evidence comes from a number of studies, one of which is Lynch's (2017) research, in which he is quoted as saying that speaking is the capacity to communicate one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions to other individuals. Riddle, S., Cleaver, D. (2002) argues that speaking accuracy is easy for the listener to understand if they succeed in vocabulary, and Amelia, M. & Komariah E. (2017) discovered in her research that vocabulary is the most significant challenge that students face when speaking. If students are lacking in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, then it is difficult for them to convey their ideas.

In the context of language difficulties, we identified pronunciation as another difficulty that inhibited our participants from speaking English properly. They were concerned about their pronunciation. Our participants said that pronunciation was one of the most difficult aspects of speaking since the English sound is seldom the same as the written version. Students said that they have difficulty pronouncing English correctly. Another said that "I also struggle with pronunciation, in addition to my little vocabulary. Whether my pronunciation is correct or not, I honestly don't know." These statistics indicate that EFL students may have difficulties with pronunciation due to the substantial differences between the English sound and written systems. Our findings also revealed that our participants exhibited lower levels of confidence in speaking English due to uncertainty over the accuracy of their utterances.

Additionally, we found that our participants had difficulties in implementing correct English grammar. Our participants said that grammar became a primary concern for them while speaking English, particularly in relation to sentence construction. Their primary concern was that the listeners would not comprehend their spoken expressions. Students mentioned that they often have difficulty with grammar while speaking English. For instance, they frequently overlook the use of the past tense when describing an action that has already occurred, and when speaking in the present continuous, they frequently forget to use the verb "be." In addition, Hetrakul (1995) emphasized the significance of grammar in developing students' speaking skills. In order to achieve English proficiency, it is imperative for individuals to utilize grammar correctly in order to generate coherent and meaningful sentences. Grammar is regarded as the initial stage in acquiring any language, in addition to pronunciation. It is worth noting that the interview data above revealed that grammar had become a key barrier to our participants' ability to communicate in English. The participants' desire to speak English was impacted by their lack of grammatical understanding.

Another interesting finding related to linguistic barriers was the sub-theme of thinking in Vietnamese-the mother tongue first. Many students instinctively think in their native language before translating their thoughts into the target language. This can lead to delays in speech and awkward phrasing as students struggle to find equivalent expressions in English. This process often results in literal translations that may not convey the intended meaning accurately. Our survey results also revealed that thinking in Vietnamese-the mother tongue first was one of the barriers for our participants in speaking English.

Internal problems

In addition to linguistic barriers, our findings identified a theme of internal factors. Under this theme, our participants' interview data demonstrated that internal factors, in most cases, hampered EFL students from being active English speakers. We found five influential psychological factors, including being afraid of making

mistakes, anxiety, lack of motivation, lack of confidence, and hesitations. This finding is consistent with the Nakhlah (2016) study; the findings revealed and suggested that the students at Al Quds Open University had difficulty speaking for a variety of reasons, including fear of making mistakes, shyness, nervousness, and a lack of confidence.

Fear of making mistakes in class can inhibit their willingness to speak, as they worry about being judged or corrected publicly. This fear often stems from a lack of confidence, which is compounded by shyness, making it particularly challenging to speak in front of peers. Anxiety is heightened when communicating with foreign teachers, where the pressure to perform well in a non-native language can be overwhelming. Besides, students said that they always cannot utter a word when their heart beats a lot due to the fact that they cannot figure out what English words to say. Additionally, students may feel demotivated when they see others performing better, leading to a sense of inadequacy.

The emotions of shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes often impede students from actively participating in speaking activities. Furthermore, Lauwtie (2004) believes that an individual's ability to speak can be influenced by their emotional condition. Speech tends to be more articulate when a person is confident and relaxed, as opposed to lacking confidence and feeling anxious. Put simply, the internal factor influences an individual's ability to succeed in public speaking. These findings are also corroborated by the data obtained from this study.

Motivation is very important to the success of learning the second language. It plays an important role in any language skills, in particular speaking skills. But many students only learn English because it is a compulsory subject. They do not recognize the importance of English to them in the future, and they study it with very little motivation or no incentive at all. They just need to take written exams, so they do not care about the spoken language. According to the teachers, the student's learning of English was driven by testing, and grammar, not speaking skills, played a decisive role in all the English exams. Although students realized how important it was for them to be able to communicate in English in their future careers, they still cared a lot about grammar because they were only motivated to pass exams that did not include speaking skills. In their minds, English is only a "secondary" subject. They need to learn English because it is a compulsory subject in the syllabus, and not many of them really love English and learn it as a hobby.

External problems

The third theme we developed through our analysis of the data was external problems we found interrelated sub-themes including (1) textbooks; (2) peers; (3) environment. The first sub-theme was textbooks. The importance of materials in language teaching and learning has been extensively acknowledged (McGrath, 2013). According to Ahmed and Shameem (2017), "a good textbook goes a long way toward promoting more predictable learning outcomes in the average teaching-learning situation. Using or interpreting textbooks can promote good learning. A good textbook carries with it built-in structural scaffolding that ensures certain desirable outcomes even in situations where teachers are not prepared, not reflective, untrained, and indifferent." The data obtained from this study also corroborate these findings. In this research, the majority of students said they felt the topics of their textbooks were not interesting enough ($M = 3.43$), so it caused difficulties for them to develop speaking skills in class.

Aside from the textbooks, the interaction between learner and learner also contribute to one of the difficulties that students encounter when learning to speak English. To demonstrate this, several theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have focused on the significance of input. In the classroom setting, students not only generate language via interaction but also acquire new linguistic information from their peers as input. Saeed, Karwan, Khaksari, Mahta, Eng, Lin, and Abdul Ghani, Ahmad Mahreez (2016) concluded that the contact between learners had a significant impact on improving the speaking skills of language learners. In addition, the participants of the research who engaged in interactive class activities to learn the English language had significantly better scores in the posttest compared to the pretest. The study's findings also revealed that meaningful contact among students played a crucial role in the development of speaking abilities. The results acquired from this investigation also support these findings. With statement "I do not have opportunities to practice speaking in class because my classmates are unwilling to practice speaking English with me." received the highest mean score of 3.52, 52% was the percentage that showed how much students agreed with the statement. This causes difficulties for students at ABC School learning to speak English. The interview revealed that the students stated that they want to practice speaking English with my classmates, but they often say, 'No, or I'm busy'.

According to research surveys, the lack of opportunities to practice speaking English during class time and outside environments to practice speaking English regularly causes significant difficulties in learning to speak English. Some students said that they had difficulty finding outside environments to practice speaking English regularly. The statement "I rarely have chances to practice English during the class lesson." had a quite high mean score ($M = 3.37$). Multiple investigations have emphasized the substantial influence of a lack of chances to

practice speaking on the acquisition of competent English-speaking skills. Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) emphasizes the importance of language production in developing linguistic proficiency, indicating that classrooms that lack opportunities for speaking practice impede students' advancement. Littlewood (1981) highlights the need for communicative activities, pointing out that conventional teacher-centered methods often fall short of offering essential speaking opportunities. Similarly, Richards (2006) supports the use of task-based learning and interactive strategies to cultivate a classroom climate that promotes communication. Lightbown and Spada (2013) emphasize the need to engage in frequent and diverse speaking activities to facilitate the process of acquiring language, while Brown (2007) underscores the significance of interaction in fostering fluency and building confidence. These studies together demonstrate that when students do not have enough chances to speak during class, they encounter substantial challenges in becoming proficient in spoken English.

Lecturer's teaching method-related problems

A fourth theme developed from our data analysis was teaching method. In this theme, we found two consistent issues (traditional methods and interaction between teacher and student) that emerged among our participants. As indicated in Table 3.25 to lecturer's teaching method-related problems ($M = 2.5460$). It means most student respondents disagreed with the difficulties caused by their lecturers' teaching methods with the disagreed responses which were much higher than the agreed ones. In particular, the percentage of student respondents highly disagreed with their lecturers who always puts questions to the whole class, and then she selects some students to answer (49.21%). Additionally, the results indicated that the participants denied challenging factors caused by their teacher does not encourage us when we make errors in speaking (around 49.21%). The students' replies suggest that 61.91% of the participants had no preference for the statement, "My teacher often asks us to discuss a topic while we have no idea of how to discuss." Next, most of the students disagree with expressed that their teacher often corrects them while they speak; as a result, they often forget what she has corrected. with nearly half (31/63, or 49.21%) disagreeing and three (4.76%) strongly disagreeing. The majority of students surveyed disagreed with nearly half (31/63, or 49.21%) disagreeing and three (4.76%) strongly disagreeing with statement of their teachers does not provide them with activities that helps them memorize words and structures that they have learnt.

The findings of the current study present contrasting results to those of Tram Huynh (2020), who highlight the impact of lecturers limited speaking competence on students' speaking performance. These findings shed light on the challenges associated with teaching methods. Our data suggest that teachers' methods, including factors such as traditional methods and interaction between teacher and student, are not important in speaking English as a foreign language at ABC School. The current study challenges the prevailing view that lecturers' speaking competence and teaching methods are paramount in influencing students' speaking performance. At ABC School, these factors do not appear to be critical, suggesting the need to explore other avenues to enhance students' English-speaking skills. This divergence from Tram Huynh (2020) highlights the complexity of language learning and the importance of context-specific research in educational practices. She conducted her research at the university in a different way than the researcher involved in this study.

Research question 2: What efforts are made by English teachers and students to overcome the problem?

For teachers

Every issue or difficulty needs a resolution. A solution refers to a resolution or an effective means of resolving an issue. In this forum, academics will explore strategies to address the difficulties that instructors face while instructing young learners in speaking skills. According to the findings of an interview carried out by researchers at ABC School, certain difficulties encountered by instructors were recognized and addressed, and potential ways to overcome these obstacles were also examined.

Improving Vocabulary Memorization

All the instructors follow the same approach, advising the students to memorize vocabulary to enhance their knowledge. Memorizing is something that a lot of people learning a language want to improve at. They will use flashcards for regular practice. Incorporate digital tools like Quizlet or Anki for interactive learning. Kayi (2006) says the second language production of English sounds, patterns, word choice, sentence stress, intonation, and rhythms have various meanings. When children had trouble speaking, body movements helped them employ whole phrases instead of just a few words. When students say unclear or low sentences, the teacher usually tells them to raise their voices, but if young learners' pitches remain unclear or small, the teacher will immediately sing loudly so that all students can sing along fiercely. Other ways the instructor provides examples for children who only speak one or two words and don't utilize entire sentences include imitating animals, such as "it's a tiger," or presenting objects related to vocabulary terms, such as "it's a chair." From there, young learners learn sentence structure. Teachers employ the Total Physical Response Method (TPR) to instruct young learners. Responding to verbal instruction with physical motions employs language or vocabulary ideas. Imitating the

process by which young learners acquire their native language reduces student inhibitions and tension. Young learners can easily remember the phrases they study.

Building Student's Confidence

Confidence is the most critical component of learning English. In this case, the instructors reported that they overcame the first barrier of lack of student's confidence by combining active kids with children who were not active or lacked confidence, allowing them to collaborate while active peers assisted or guided. Friends who are not as active or confident become outstanding. In the classroom, the instructors divide the pupils into groups based on their level of activity. Many pupils desire to connect and participate in learning. If there are children in my class who lack confidence, the instructors will engage in activities that drain their energy, such as playing while studying in class or singing and dancing. When kids participate in these activities, those who are shy tend to open up and communicate with their peers. Teachers utilized the same strategy to solve the problem, inviting young learners to play in a group with the goal of increasing their self-confidence. As a result, individuals may indirectly engage in activities with their friends without feeling ashamed or afraid. According to, Nidya Andini Oktavia (2020) confidence issues are one of the challenges. Many Indonesian pupils struggle greatly with speaking confidently. They are too hesitant or unmotivated to speak out since they don't believe in themselves. When they make a speech mistake, they feel terrible because they are embarrassed to be dishonest. So, building the confidence to make someone more confidence than before is importance to be discussed.

Consistent Practice for Students English Speaking

According to A H M Ohidujjaman: "Practicing regularly is important for improving speaking skills." To tackle the issue of inconsistent practice time for students to enhance their English-speaking abilities, instructors might include numerous strategies both inside and outside the classroom. In-class strategies, such as beginning and ending lessons with short speech exercises and including interactive activities like debates and role-playing, give frequent chances for speaking practice. Using technology via language learning apps and online speaking platforms outside of the classroom may give additional opportunities for practice. To enhance practice time, it is beneficial to create English-speaking groups and assign speaking-related homework activities, such as filming videos or conducting interviews. In addition, cultivating a nurturing classroom atmosphere and offering ongoing, constructive comments may inspire students and facilitate their progress. By integrating these methods, educators may provide a more uniform and captivating structure for learners to improve their English oral skills, even in the face of limited opportunities for regular practice.

Teacher Training and Resource Utilization

After conducting interviews, the teachers admitted to having a limited comprehension of speaking subjects and using a passive teaching method that lacked creativity and excitement. In order to tackle these concerns, they plan to engage in seminars and training sessions that specifically target speaking abilities, with the goal of broadening their knowledge of various speaking topics. In addition, they will use resources such as textbooks, online courses, and educational blogs to stay updated on new methodologies and subjects in the area of public speaking. Furthermore, it is crucial to interact with other educators. Engaging in peer observations and collaborating with other educators to share ideas and resources may provide valuable perspectives on successful teaching methods. In order to ensure that the materials are suitable for the students' abilities, they will first evaluate their proficiency. Subsequently, they will use this knowledge to choose or modify the items in a suitable approach. Through the integration of collaborative efforts, ongoing professional development, and tailored material selection, they effectively navigate the challenges connected with teaching speaking skills.

For students

Most students had no responses when asked whether they had come up with any solutions regarding the difficulties they mentioned. Regarding this, the researcher can make some assumptions, as follows: One answer that can be put forward concerning the reason why the students were not able to offer solutions is that the students have limited knowledge regarding those issues of learning, namely speaking another language. They might provide answers concerning how to get opportunities to speak in a group or when working in pairs. Nevertheless, it is unlikely for such a thing to occur if students are timid or quite introverted. Second, because this is a sixth grader or young learner, they are not mature enough to find solutions to overcome difficulties in learning speaking skills. They just said the most basic solutions, like signing up for speaking courses at English centers or online courses with foreign teachers to practice their English-speaking skills and memorize the vocabulary to which teachers assigned their homework. In addition, they aim to enhance their speaking skills by engaging in discussions or exchanging ideas with their classmates during group projects.

V. Conclusion

Summary

The first question, “What are the main difficulties encountered by teachers and students when teaching and learning speaking skills in a class?” was designed to investigate the main challenges faced by teachers and students when teaching and developing speaking skills in classes. The general results illustrated that teaching EFL is challenging due to four salient factors: 1) linguistic problems (students’ lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of using their mother tongue); (2) internal problems (students often exhibit low self-esteem, poor attention spans, passive behavior, excessive noise, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation.); (3) external problems (the lack of regular practice time, the class size, the time limit, the exams, the arrangement of tables and chairs, and mixed student’s level); (4) teaching method (restricted knowledge, determining the method and material, finding intriguing activities, and designing assessments).

The overall findings demonstrated that acquiring proficiency in spoken English is challenging due to three prominent issues: (1) linguistic problems (lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, pronunciation issues, and the habit of thinking the mother tongue first); (2) internal problems (afraid of making mistakes, nervous/anxiety, demotivation, lack confidence, and hesitations); (3) external problems (textbooks, peers, and environment).

The second question, “What efforts are made by English teachers and students to minimize these problems?” was about how teachers and students can minimize these difficulties. The data from the interview disclosed that: From the teacher’s viewpoint, many main methods emerge: First, instructors should concentrate on boosting students’ vocabulary memory via interesting activities and approaches that help new words and phrases stick. Second, building students’ confidence is also critical; instructors may foster a supportive, low-stress learning atmosphere that fosters risk-taking and sees failures as learning opportunities. Third, consistent practice is crucial, therefore instructors should provide students plenty of opportunity to participate in organized speaking exercises, discussions, and real-world encounters. Finally, teacher training and appropriate use of learning materials may provide educators with the necessary skills and tools to overcome frequent speaking issues.

Implications

Implications for students

Practice regularly and consistently

As generally known, practice regularly can improve students’ knowledge. The more they practice, the more they improve their knowledge. Consistent practice is vital for developing speaking skills. Students should take advantage of any chance to participate in conversation, whether with classmates, language partners, tutors, or native speakers. This might include taking part in group debates, role-playing games, casual conversations, or even retelling their everyday experiences aloud. Students will grow more comfortable, confident, and proficient as they practice speaking more. Regular practice not only reinforces vocabulary and grammar, but it also familiarizes pupils with the natural flow, rhythm, and intonation of spoken language. With each interaction, individuals acquire experience with real language use and a greater intuitive understanding of how to communicate successfully. Furthermore, practice helps students to obtain feedback, identify areas for growth, and actively work on shortcomings such as pronunciation, fluency, and proper usage of idioms and phrases. Students should strive to practice speaking on a daily basis, even if it is just for a few minutes. This slow, progressive approach to improving speaking abilities is much more beneficial than random, last-minute cramming sessions. With commitment and patience, students may gradually reduce their challenges and become more adept communicators.

Embrace mistakes and learn from them.

Another important method is for students to accept errors as a normal and necessary part of the language learning process, rather than something to be avoided. Mistakes are great learning opportunities, enabling students to discover areas for development and experiment with new vocabulary, grammar, and phrases without concern about perfection.

Students who feel comfortable taking chances and making errors are more likely to actively engage in discussions, experiment with language, and push the limits of their ability. This promotes an open, growth-oriented mentality, which is required for long-term speaking competence.

However, it is equally critical for pupils to get constructive comments and instruction about their errors. Working with instructors, tutors, or language partners to identify and fix faults may help to expedite the learning process. Students should regard comments as a tool for progress rather than condemnation. Students may get the confidence and resilience required to continue practicing and developing their speaking abilities by adopting a mentality that views errors as learning opportunities. This thinking adjustment may considerably reduce the challenges they confront and help them become more fluent, expressive speakers.

Implications for teachers

Teachers' self-improvement of speaking skill

As we all know, instructors' linguistic talents seem to decline after many years of teaching in secondary schools. Teachers who teach secondary school students frequently use Vietnamese because their students do not understand everything in English; teachers must clarify their mother tongue vocabulary, grammar, and even teaching rather than the targeted language, or they will lose interest in the lesson and cause discipline issues. As a result, it's understandable that their speech isn't as fluent as it once was. Many instructors admit that they struggle to communicate in English at times. They should attempt to tackle this challenge by self-practicing at home. Teachers should set a good example if they wish to help their pupils improve their speaking abilities.

Teacher's training

One of the reasons why teachers are not very good at teaching spoken English is that they are not sufficiently trained in teaching spoken English. In view of the current situation of teaching and learning English in secondary schools in Vietnam in general and in ABC School in particular, the improvement of teacher training is urgently needed. Teachers need more training in teaching methods as well as more theoretical and sociolinguistic knowledge. Training should be aimed at developing the teacher's ability to "adopt a research orientation towards their own classrooms and their own teaching" in order to determine the appropriateness, feasibility, applicability, and, in practice, methods for their pedagogical situations. Training should be aimed at developing the ability of the teacher "to adopt a research orientation towards their own classrooms and their own teaching" in order to decide the appropriateness, feasibility, and applicability. If the teachers take part in training courses or seminars on speaking and socio-linguistic teaching, they can improve their knowledge and exchange their teaching experience so that they can teach more effectively.

Limitations of the study

Despite the study's positives, the researcher's restricted competence highlights some limitations. Initially, the research included a limited number of students and teachers, which may limit the findings' applicability to all students and instructors. The research was conducted with only 63 lower secondary students and 20 English teachers from a single school, ABC. While this provided an in-depth examination of the challenges faced at this particular institution, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other school contexts. Additionally, the study relied primarily on self-reported data from surveys and interviews, which can be subject to potential biases. Furthermore, the study was limited to a snapshot in time and did not explore how these challenges may evolve over the course of the academic year or across grade levels. Future research could expand the sample size, incorporate multiple data sources, and adopt a longitudinal design to provide a more robust and transferable analysis of the difficulties in teaching and learning English speaking skills in lower secondary education. Despite the inevitable limitation, the researcher believes that this study will be beneficial to teaching ABC students speaking skills, which may lead to students speaking. This research focused only on teaching English-speaking skills to students in sixth grade at ABC School. The research only addresses a tiny percentage of the challenges surrounding teaching and acquiring speaking skills.