An Investigation in to Using Communicative Activities in Teaching English Speaking Skills at High Schools in Bac Ninh Province

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ABSTRACT: The present study aims to investigate the reality of teaching and learning English speaking by using communicative activities for students in grade 10th at High schools in Bac Ninh province in Vietnam. There were ten teachers and 300 students participated in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative methodology were applied in the research. The data of research was collected by three research instruments including questionnaires, class observation and interviews. The study proved that teachers used Game, Discussion and Role play more than Class survey. Applying these activities was flexible and dependent upon the cognitive ability of students. Another finding from the survey was that both teachers and students felt interested in using communicative activities in speaking lessons. In the effort of carrying out various methods of research, the study explored the difficulties in the application of communicative for grade 10th students' English speaking classes at two high schools. With these findings, the research suggestion could help the teachers and students at two high schools improve their quality of teaching and learning English, especially in speaking skills.

KEY WORDS: speaking skills, communicative activities, speaking lessons, group work

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world today. Due to its importnace in various espects, more and more learners set their priority purposes in learning English especially learners in Asian countries in general and in Vietnam in particular. English is considered as one of the three compulsory subjects in General Certificate of Secondary and high school Education examination in Vietnamese education.

Although English is taught from Primary, many High School graduates are in low level of English skills, especially speaking skill. It is believed that there are several reasons causing the students' difficulties in speaking. Some of the reasons are due to the old teaching methods which were less effective. In the past, the methodology was teacher-centered and focused only on reading and writing. Grammar was considered as primary importance and was often taught most thoroughly. This also causedcommon problems for learners in practicing speaking.Grammar –Translation method was mainly used in teaching English. Teachers usually taught grammar in each lesson by using most of the activities such as reading the dialogues, reciting texts and doing written exercises.

That is the reason why students are not able to use English they have learnt for a long time for the purpose of communication. They cannot speak English even in a daily conversation, so they obviously find it difficult to use English in a communicative environment in their future jobs. The reality requires that high school English teachers need to pay more attention to students' speaking skill. It is better for students if teachers apply Communicative Language Teaching in the classroom. To achieve the goals of learning English , communicative activities in English classes are very necessary. It seems to be easy for teachers to apply some communicative activities in speaking lessons which always deal with an important characteristic "learners talk a lot" (Brown, 2001).

Based on teaching context at Yen Phong number 1 High School, all English teachers have applied communicative activities in teaching. By using some typical types of communicative activities such as group work, role play or discussion, teachers really draw students' participation in speaking activities. However, teachers often face some challenges when they organize the

communicative activities in speaking classes. The first difficulty is that the number of students in one class is big (about 45 students) with different cognitive abilities, which leads to the fact that many students can't take part in all speaking activities. Secondly, all previous examinations still only focused on grammar and vocabulary. It is the reason why students don't spend much time practicing speaking skill.

To enhance teaching quality of English, the new English text books approved by the Ministry of Education have applied in most part of the country. The new text book focuses mainly on communication skills. In addition, each unit includes a project part at the end of the last lesson which requires students work in groups to do surveys on one topic at home and present it in front of the whole class after that. Consequently, students improve their speaking skill a lot. Most of the grade tenth students at my school feel eager to practice speaking in both speaking lesson and project part.

However, teachers still can't avoid the fact that each class has a lot of students with different levels. Obviously, there are some students that can't take part in communicative activities and understand the lesson as well. Furthermore, the knowledge in the new text book is relatively difficult with a lot of new words and each period has many activities. Teachers can hardly complete all activities in a forty five minute period. In reality, the cognitive ability of students of different classes are not the same, so teachers need to use types of communicative activities in speaking lessons flexibly.

Such problems mentioned above lead to the essential of the thesis: An investigation into using communicative activities in teaching English speaking skills at high schools in Bac Ninh province. The study is done for collecting data of the real practice of using the activities in speaking classes at some high schools in Bac Ninh province and suggesting solutions for teachers to help their students learn English better.

1.2. Aims of the study

The study aims to realize the reality of applying communicative activities in teaching English speaking skill of grade tenth students at two schools at Bac Ninh Province that are Yen Phong number 1 High School and Yen Phong number 2 High School in terms of types of communicative activities and the opinions of both teacher and students about these activities, then to find out some solutions for difficulties in the teaching and learning process and to suggest some implications for practicing communicative activities.

1.3 Research questions

      1. What types of communicative activities are used in speaking lessons?
      2. What are the attitudes of both Teachers and Students toward communicative activities?
      3. What are difficulties in applying communicative activities?

1.4. Scope of the study

The scope of the research is limited to a survey on the real situation of using communicative activities in teaching English speaking skills for grade tenth students at two high schools in Bac Ninh province that are Yen Phong number 1 High School and Yen Phong number 2 High School. Therefore, the researcher tries to realize what types of communicative activities are used in teaching English speaking skills for grade tenth students at two High Schools in BacNinh province as well as the opinions of teachers and students about applying communicative activities in speaking lessons.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of speaking skill

Speaking is considered as the most important one among four skills of learning English due to the purpose of language communication. Oxford dictionary defines "Speaking is the action of conveying information or expressing one's feelings in speech". Another definition is that speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998). Speaking is an important part of second language learning and teaching.

In particular, English speaking skill is defined in different ways. "Speaking is a productive skill in the oral mode. It is like the other skills, is more complicated than it seems at the first and involves more than just pronouncing words."(Azem, M. & Dogar, M.H., 2011). Hornby (1995) defines that speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real-life situations. It focuses on everyday interaction and the speaking ability of fluency and comprehension. In addition, "Speaking is one of the skills that have to be mastered by students in learning English. Speaking is an essential tool for communicating"(Grognet A.G, 1997).

Speaking skill consists of two major categories –accuracy, involving the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practiced through controlled and guided activities; and fluency considered to be "the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously" (Harmer, 2001). Bryne, D. (1986) additionally declares that accuracy refers to the use of correct forms where utterances do not contain errors affecting the phonological, syntactic and semantic or discourse features of a language ; fluency may be known as the ability to keep on speaking without too much hesitation and too many pauses to cause a breakdown in communication. In this case, instant correction shouldn't be used since it could interfere with the process of communication.

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2. 2. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate the learning and roles of the teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006:2). Harmer (2001:84) adds that communicative language teaching is a set of beliefs which includes not only re-examination of what aspects of language to teach that stresses the significance of language functions, but also a shift in emphasis in how to teach that is related to the idea that language learning will take care of itself and that plentiful exposure to language in use and plentiful opportunities to use it are vitally important to students' development of knowledge and skills.

As (Brown 2001:46) Communicative Language Teaching tends to be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. It requires the students to acknowledge the language forms, meaning, and functions of the language. It leads students to communicate in meaningful ways in certain situations.

2.2.1. The Characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching

Brown (2001:43) suggests the six interconnected characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching. They are described as follows:

1) Classroom goals are focused on all the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence.

2) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learners to accomplish those purposes.

3) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use

4) Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and respectively, in unrehearsed context outside the classroom. .Classroom tasks must therefore equip the students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

5) Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding on their own styles of leaning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning, and

6) The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all knowing best owner of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

The characteristics above indicate that the purpose of learning the language in Communicative Language Teaching is to gain all components of language by engaging students in meaningful communication. Communicative Language Teaching also sees fluency as important as accuracy. Therefore, the teacher needs to balance the activities which focus on both fluency and accuracy. The teacher should also provide classroom activities with many opportunities to use the language through appropriate strategies and autonomous learning. Students are considered to be the center of the class by guidance from the teacher.

2.2.2. The Goal of Communicative Language Teaching

Richards (2006:3) also states that communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge as follows:

(1) knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.

 (2) knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and participants.

(3) knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts.

(4) knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitation in one's language knowledge. It means that to reach communicative competence, students need to know how to use the language according to its purposes and functions in many different situations.

Brown (2001:69) states that the communicative competence is the goal of a language classroom which can be achieved by giving attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency not just accuracy, to authentic language and context, and students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world. It implies that students need to acquire communicative competence so that the can us the language accurately, appropriately and effectively. Celce Murcia et.al. (1995:10) divides communicative competence into discourse competence, linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, active competence and strategic competence.

2.3. Communicative activities

Communicative activities include some activities that engage the learners where their main purpose of the activities is to motivate communication (Littlewood, 2002:16). Harmer (2001:85) also states that communicative activities can encourage students to be involved in real or realistic communication. Therefore, the key element is that the activity is based on an authentic situation. Communicative activities refers to the classroom activities that provide a genuine information gap and make it possible for language learners to communicate with target language in Communicative Language Teaching Approaches (Liao, 2000). In other words, communicative activities are activities that give students both a desire to communicate and a purpose which involves them in a varied use of language. Communicative activities are also defined that they are fluency-based activities (Tait,S.,2001). It means that these activities help students speak English fluently rather than correctly.

2.3.1. Features of communicative activities

Savignon (2001) claims that "the problem at present is that some of the activities being introduced as communicative activities are not communicative at all but structure drills in disguise". Actually, many teachers may think that the activities they design and use in class are communicative, but actually they are not. Therefore, the features that make a real communicative activity should be focused on. Below are the features of communicative activities proposed by Harmer (2001:85):

    a) desire to communicate, means that the students should have a desire to communicate something.

    b) a communicative purpose, means that the students should have a purpose for communicating (e.g.to make appointment, to buy an airlines ticket, to write a letter to a newspaper).

    c) content not form, means that students should be focused on the content of what they are saying or writing rather than on a particular language form.

    d) variety of language, means that students should use a variety of language rather than just one language structure

    e) no teacher intervention, means that the teacher will not intervene to stop the activity

    f) no materials control, means that the materials the teacher relies on will not dictate what specific language forms the student use either.

Activities are truly communicative. Similarly, Morrow (1981 as cited in Manajitt, 2008) points out that there are three elements in communicative activities including information gap, choice and feedback

- An information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something the other person does not. For instance, if two students both know the name of the film is "Titanic" and one asks the other "What is the name of this film??" and he/she answers "Titanic", their exchange is not really communicative.

- Speakers' choices in communication are very important. Speakers should have a choice of what they will say and how they will say it. If the teacher forces students only to say something in one way, they have no choice and the exchange; therefore, seems not to be communicative.

- Feedback is totally necessary for true communication. The teacher and listeners should give the speaker detailed feedback, which helps the speaker avoid mistakes and improve their speaking skill. If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker with such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative.

From these features, it may be easier to distinguish between communicative activities and non-communicative activities. In a communicative activity, students must have a desire to communicate, and there must be some communicative purposes to their communication. Their attention will be focused on the content of what they are saying rather than the form. They will use a wide variety of language, and the teacher will not intervene by telling students they have made mistakes in their English or correcting their pronunciation, etc. While in non-communicative activities, there will be no desire to communicate, nor will students have a communicative purpose. Students are involved in repetition or substitution drills so that they can be motivated by the need to attain accuracy, not by a desire to achieve a communicative objective.

2.3.2. The significance of communicative activities in speaking lessons

Every speaking lesson should be based on communicative activities because these activities can help students be involved in learning how to use language for the purpose of communication. Communicative activities can motivate the classroom and prepare the learners for real-life interaction (Gower, Phillips and Walters, 2005). They encourage students to acquire language knowledge and prepare them for real-life language uses. Achieving the outcome requires the participants to interact, which means not only speak with a person but also listen to what he or she is saying and react to it.

Thornbury (2008) characterizes the communicative activities motivate students to complete specific outcomes and express language without any restrictions. Communicative activities are used as the treatment of improving students' speaking ability. The class is a conversation class which focuses more on the speaking ability. Communicative competences are the skills that they need to master and thus an effective learning is needed in order to reach the objectives. Based on the discussion with the collaborators, communicative activities are the suitable method to be conducted in order to cover the learning of the communicative competences.

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It is expected that the activities can engage students in communication which requires the use of communication processes, such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. The activities including asking and answering questions, role playing, having discussion, debating, playing games and group working can improve students' speaking skill.

Communicative activities have a great influence on students' motivation in the speaking lessons. They help students have more chance to communicate with their classmates without a fear of making mistakes. In communicative activities, instead of asking students to stand in front of the whole class, the teacher designs activities that they can talk to some other students. That helps students avoid their fear of making mistakes. Therefore, they will feel more confident and eager to speak a lot.

In communicative Language Teaching, it is suggested that language should be taught through the use of target language and practice communication, especially through communicative activities. They focus on not only the grammatical structure of the language but also the language used in authentic situations. Therefore, to learn English for the purpose of communication, applying communicative activities in speaking lessons is really necessary.

2.3.3. Types of communicative activities
Each author has his/her own point of view on communicative activities. However, all of them mention the same or similar communicative tasks but to different extent. Here are some types of typical communicative activities.

2.3.3.1. Information gap activities
Thornbury (2005) claims that in these kinds of tasks there is a knowledge gap among learners and it can be bridged by using the language. So, in order to obtain the information, the participants have to communicate. Little wood (1994) labels these activities as functional communication activities. He emphasizes sharing the information among learners and its processing.

The most common information gap activity is spotting the differences in the pictures, exchanging personal information, guessing games and also creating the story based on flashcards shown to the students in random order, for a few seconds and one flashcard per group only. This makes the students cooperate and communicate with each other to find the lacking information.

2.3.3.2. Discussion
Celce-Murcia (2001) mentions that students need to be reminded that each person within a group should have a specific responsibility in the discussion either keeping time, taking notes or reporting the results made by the group members. Therefore, Students are often asked to discuss a topic in the textbook or outside the text book. They have some minutes to find ideas about the topic in groups or in pairs and after that they will present before the whole class.

2.3.5.3. Role play
One of the best communicative activities is a role play which trains students in the classroom to deal with unpredictable real-life conversation in an English speaking environment. Ladousse (1987) claims that using the role play in the lessons can put students in situations in which they are required to use and develop language necessary in social relationships and also helps them to build up their social skills. Using role plays is useful especially while teaching shy students who have difficulty to participate in conversation about them. A role play is an essential communicative activity which develops fluency, promotes interaction in the classroom and increases motivation.

2.3.3.4. Class survey
A class survey is an activity where students have to work in groups to ask each other questions to find information, which they need to analyze and present after that. Doing surveys can be a useful way of getting students to interact, produce question forms, collect and analyze real information. The key qualities of surveys are that they are communicative and dynamic. In the new English 10 textbook, class survey activity is designed for the Project lesson. Teachers often ask students to do survey on the topic in the textbook in groups at home and then present the survey in front of the class.

2.4. Related Studies
There are some previous studies which show that various communicative activities in teaching speaking can improve students' speaking skills.

Firstly, a study done by Oradee (2012) in which the researcher used three communicative activities (discussion, problem-solving and role-playing) to improve the students' speaking skills. The study proved that the students' speaking abilities after using the three communicative activities were significantly higher than before and that the students' attitude towards teaching English speaking skills using the three communicative activities were rated as good.

Secondly, Kittiya Phisuttangkoon (2012) did a research on using communicative activities to develop English speaking ability of the First Year Vocational Students. In the study, the researchers carried out the experiment using communicative activities to encourage students to speak based on six language functions. The duration of the implementation was eight weeks including the pre- test and post- test. The results showed that the learners had the positive perceptions and attitude toward the use of communicative activities.

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Thirdly, Intan Nur Charina (2013) conducted a study using communicative activities to improve students' speaking skill. The author did research at ABC'S class and proved the fact that using communicative activities in teaching speaking skills improved students' motivation. In the study, the researcher pointed out the effectiveness of communicative activities on the First Year Vocational Students.

Last but not least, a thesis by Chau Tuyet Ngan (2013) was done to make clear the application of communicative activities in speaking classes of grade 11th students at Cao Lanh City High School. The data of research was collected by three research instruments that are questionnaires, class observation and interviews. The data showed that the communicative activities were not applied in English speaking classes of 11 graders at the school so lessons were designed and applied as the sample ones. Together with the result from trial teaching, the benefits and challenges in the application of communicative activities at the school were realized. Some solutions for the problem also were suggested in the study.

Those studies show that communicative activities could be effective activities which provide students with a lot of opportunities to practice their English in certain contexts of real life. These activities are suitable for English learners in all level and age. However, there is a fact that teachers may have some difficulties when applying these activities in speaking lessons. Moreover, the thesis about a survey on the real situation of using communicative activities in teaching English speaking skills for grade tenth students at some high schools in Bac Ninh province has not been done before. Thus, the researcher of this study decides to conduct an investigation into the real practice of using communicative activities in teaching English speaking skills for grade tenth students in Bac Ninh province , particularly at two high schools that are Yen Phong number 1 High School and Yen Phong number 2 High School.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Method of the study

The research methodology which are applied in this study for qualitative and quantitative data consisted of observation, questionnaire and interview. The description, steps, and procedures for constructing each of the methods are discussed in the following section.

3.2. Participants

The survey will be conducted with the participation of ten teachers and 300 students from Yen Phong number 1 High School and Yen Phong number 2 High School. Five of ten teachers have Master degree and the others have Bachelor degree. All of them have taught English for over five years, so they have enough experience to teach English, especially speaking skill. Moreover, they always try their best to catch up with the change in the content and requirement of New Text book. Therefore, when teaching English speaking skill, they know how to use a variety of activities to encourage students to take part in the lesson. The students participated in the survey come from different classes with different levels. Some students are good at learning English but some others find difficult to speak English in front of their friends. In general, most of students know how to use basic grammatical knowledge. However, the number of students who can speak English fluently is not all. Therefore, the researcher do the survey to find out the reality of using communicative activities in speaking lessons and difficulties may have when applying these activities.

3.3.   Research procedure

The research was carried out and followed these steps:

Questionnaires will be the first step to do the survey because this data collection instrument takes a lot of time. The researchers made survey online for both teachers and students. After one week, all respondents(both teachers and students) will be collected. Secondly, the research will be continued by carrying on the second data collection instrument "observation". The researcher attended five speaking lessons and five project lessons to get an overview of teaching and learning English speaking at Yen Phong number 1 high school and Yen Phong number 2 high school. The last research instrument used in the survey is interview. The researcher interview five grade 10th students at Yen Phong number 1 high school 5 grade 10th students by asking them five wh- questions with the purpose of investigating students' opinion about speaking lessons as well as communicative activities used in these lessons Finally, the researcher sum up the results from these three research instruments that are questionnaires class observation, and interviews.

3.4. Data collection instruments

3.4.1 Questionnaires

This research instrument consists ofa series of questions and other prompts to gather information from participants. Questionnaires have more benefits than other types of surveys because they are cheap and do not require as much effort from the questioners. Moreover, they can help researchers save a lot of time since "They are self-administered and can be given to large groups at the same time" (Seliger & Elana, 1989). In this study, the participants given questions include students of grade tenth at two high schools and ten teachers of English.

3.4.1.1. Questionnaires for teachers

There is one questionnaire consisting of 14 questions designed for ten teachers of English. These questions are aimed to find out what types of communicative activities teachers often use, how they organize these activities in speaking lessons as well as their opinion about communicative activities.

3.4.1.2. Questionnaires for students

One questionnaire consisting of 2 parts (ten questions for each part) is designed for students. The first part is aimed to find out students' opinions about speaking lessons in general. The second part is aimed to realize students' opinions about communicative activities in particular. These questions are delivered to 300 students in grade tenth at both Yen Phong number 1and Yen Phong number 2 High School.

3.4.2. Observation

Miller (2004) points out that observation is the most basic research technique we can employ in our classroom. This method involves systematically watching teachers' lessons by visuals and writing that provides researchers with rich and authentic data. The future questionnaire can be used to crosscheck data. The researcher will attend five Speaking lessons and five Project lessons in tenth grade classes from two schools to get a general view of teaching and learning English Speaking at Yen Phong number 1 High School and Yen Phong number 2 High School as well as determine whether or not communicative activities are applied in English speaking lessons. The class observation is not announced to them in advance.

3.4.3. Interview

Interview is considered as a technique used to understand the experiences of others. It has been called the primary method used in qualitative research (Burnard, 1994; Doody & Noonan , 2013; Myers & Newman, 2007; Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009; Schultze & Avital, 2011) and "the most direct, research-focused interaction between research and participant" (Kazmer & Xie, 2008, p.258; see also Kvale, 1996). In this study, interviewing was used to obtain students' opinion about speaking lessons as well as communicative activities used in these lessons.

3.5. Data analytical method

The data collected through the questionnaires, observation and interview. The data obtained from questionnaires were easily analyzed by using the application of Google drive and Microsoft Excel application. The results were collected, summed and analyzed with the support of tables and charts.

VI.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Data analysis

4.1.1. Result from teachers' questionnaires

Fourteen questions were handed out to ten English teachers at two high schools: Yen Phong number 1 and Yen Phong number 2 high school. All questionnaires were collected and the results were shown below:

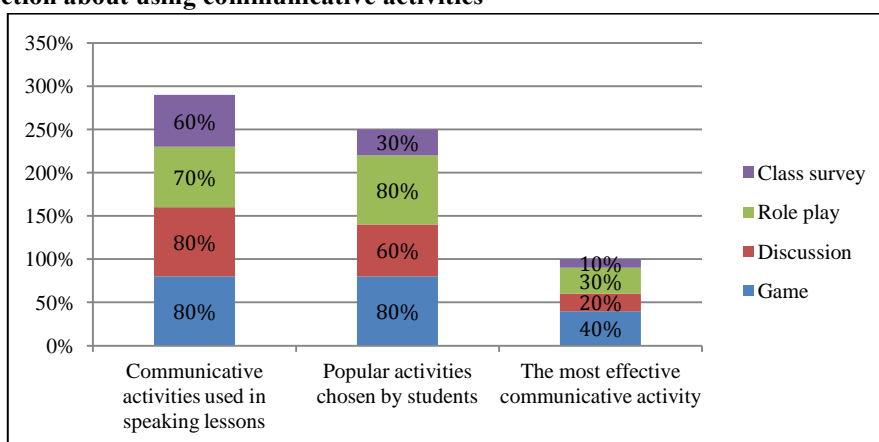### 4.1.1.1. Teachers' reflection about using communicative activities

Figure 4.1: Teachers' reflection about using communicative activities

As can be seen from figure 4.1, when teaching speaking, teachers used variety kinds of communicative activities. Three activities like Game, Discussion and Role- play were used more often than Class survey. 100 percent of teachers used these three activities; meanwhile, there were seven teachers applying Class survey. It was also clear that Role- Play and Discussion

were often chosen by almost all teachers (80 %). Besides, Game (80 %) was also an activity often used in speaking lessons. Only four teachers often used Class Survey because they explained that this activity was effective for advanced classes. For weak students, Class Survey was really difficult. The chart 4.1 also made out that the majority of students (80 %) liked Game and Role-play in the speaking lessons. Discussion was the third on the rank with the choice of 60 percent of students . From the result, it could be clear that most students didn't choose Class Survey in speaking lessons. It could be seen that the number of teachers considering Game as the most effective was more than any other activities. There were 4 teachers (40 %) choosing Game, 30 % chose Role play and 20 % of teachers chose Discussion. Only one teacher appreciated Class survey.

Table 4.1. The reasons for choosing the most effective activities

The reasons	Teachers' answer
Encourage students to work in pairs or groups	4
Improve students' critical thinking	6
Improve students' vocabulary and grammar.	0
Improve students' confidence in speaking	0

As the result from the table 4.1, six teachers thought that Game, Discussion, Role-play couldimprove students' confidence in speaking and four teachers believed that these activities could encourage students to work in pairs or groups. All teachers believed that improving students' vocabulary, grammar and their confidence in speaking was not the reason for choosing the most effective activities.

4.1.1.2. Types of class arrangement used in speaking lessons and the frequency of using types of class arrangement
In general, all ten teachers applied three main types of class arrangement in speaking lesson: group work, pair work and individually. Teachers used these activities flexibly in order to help students improve speaking skill. Because the requirement of each speaking task was different, teachers used these kinds of class arrangement with different frequency. The result was shown as following:

Table 4.2: The frequency of using types of class arrangement

Types of class arrangement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Individually		7	2	5	
Pair work				10	
Group work				10	

Table 4.2 showed that Pair work and Group work were more typical than individually. All ten teachers often used these two types of class arrangement in their speaking lessons because they could encourage students to take part in activities in each lesson. However, only five teachers often let students work individually. They explained that this could help students work actively in speaking lessons and it was also suitable for shy students.

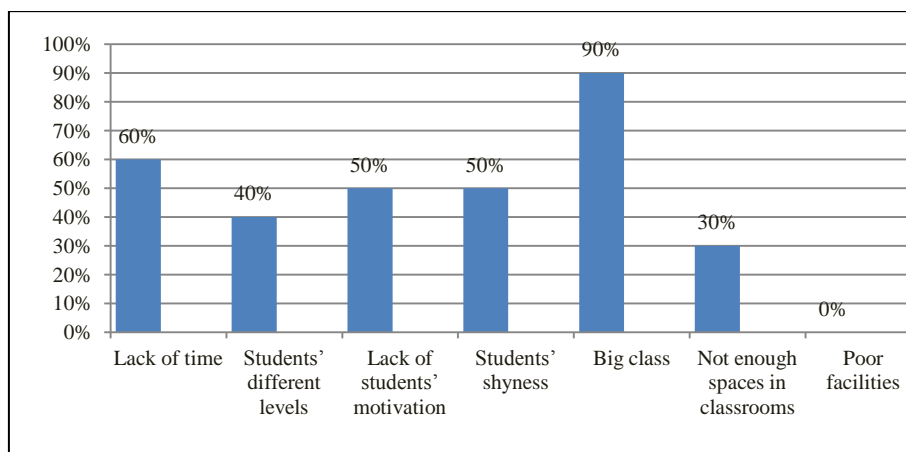**4.1.1.3. Difficulties in using communicative activities in speaking lessons**

Figure 4.2: Difficulties in using communicative activities in speaking lessons

Figure 4.2showed some difficulties when teachers used communicative activities in speaking lessons. Most teachers believed that they had difficulties in teaching speaking lessons in big classes. The following difficulties in the rank was lacking of time. Because there were many tasks students must complete, most teachers (60 percent of teachers) sometimes lacked time to finish the speaking tasks. Students' motivation or shyness was other difficulties which teachers sometimes faced to. 50 percent of teachers found that their students felt unmotivated or shy in speaking lessons. Other difficulties were not enough space in classroom and students' fear of making mistakes. Last but not least, poor facilities were not considered the challenge for teachers because both two high schools were equipped enough materials for learning English.

4.1.1.4. Teachers' solution to overcome difficulties in speaking lessons
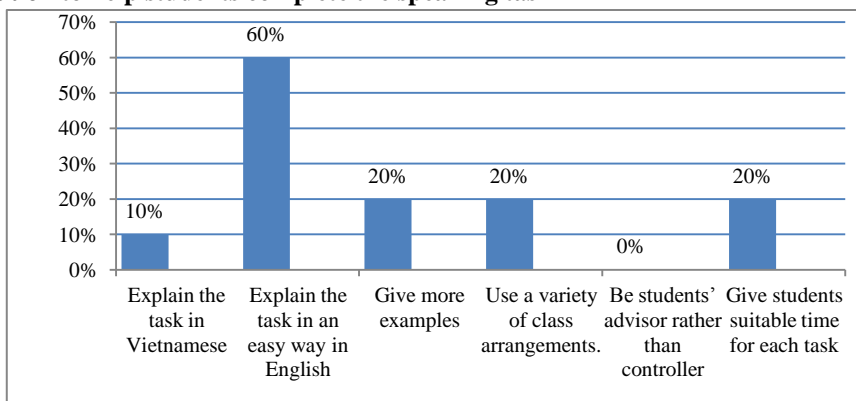**4.1.1.4.1. Teachers' solution to help students complete the speaking task**

Figure 4.3: Teachers' solution to help students complete the speaking task

It could be seen from chart 4.3 that among ten teachers, six teachers (60%) helped students complete the task by explaining the task in an easy way in English. 20 percent of teachers gave students more examples, use a variety of class arrangement or gave students suitable time for each task. Only one teacher (10%) explained the task in Vietnamese. No one considered being students as advisor rather than controller as their solution.

To overcome difficulties in speaking lessons, teachers also used other methods such as asking students to prepare lessons at home. The data showed that four of ten teachers voted for Always, four teachers supported the answer Usually, meanwhile only one teacher chose Sometimes and one teacher chose Rarely. No teacher chose Never. It meant that asking students to prepare the lessons at home was a effective way to help students complete the lessons in time. Another way to help teachers complete each task in time was designing some more activities in speaking lessons. The data proved thatonly two teachers have the answer "Usually", three teachers chose Sometimes and five teachers chose the answer "Never". No one chose "Always". The reason for their responses was time shortage. A forty five- minute lesson was not enough for teachers to complete all tasks in textbook, so they found impossible to design more activities. Therefore, that was the solution teachers didn't often used to overcome difficulty in speaking lessons.

4.1.1.4.2. Techniques teachers use to overcome difficulties in speaking lessons

Table 4.3: Techniques teachers use to overcome difficulties in speaking lessons

Techniques	Answer
Revise the suitable content of the activities	6
Omit difficult task in textbook	1
Design easier tasks	5
Reward enthusiastic students in the class	0
Use a variety of teaching techniques	1
Work as an instructor, adviser and a controller.	0
Divide the class into pairs or groups	1
Rearrange the classroom to help students move easily	0

Table 4.3 pointed out that 6 teachers based on students' competence to revise the suitable content of activities because it could help students with different levels participate in speaking lessons. Another technique which was used by half of teachers was designing easier tasks. This technique was really effective for weak students in the class because it gave them

more chance to practice. Some solutions teachers rarely applied were omitting difficult task in textbook, designing easier tasks, using a variety of teaching techniques and dividing the class into pairs or groups.

4.1.1.5. Teachers' attitudes toward using communicative activities
The data from the survey showed that the majority of teachers believed in using communicative activities because these activities could attract students. They explained that these activities were interesting and could involve students in classroom. By using communicative activities, teachers can encourage students to take part in the lessons and helped them develop speaking skill. Therefore, target of the lesson can be gained. Only one teacher thought that communicative activities could hardly be applied in classes with a lot of students because it took a lot of time.

4.1.2. Result from students' questionnaire
There are two main parts in students' questionnaire. Each part consists of ten questions which were asked 300 students of grade 10th by online survey but the number of responses collected was only 280. The rest of students had personal problems so that they didn't participate in the online survey.
4.1.2.1. Students' attitudes toward speaking lessons in general
4.1.2.1.1. Students' attitude toward speaking lessons
In the questionnaires, there are 6 items aiming at exploring students' opinion about speaking lessons in general as following:
    Item 1: You like all activities in speaking lessons.
    Item 2: Speaking lessons are interesting.
    Item 3: You feel fascinated with the speaking topics in the textbook.
    Item 4: Your teacher sometimes gives topics outside the textbook.
    Item 5: In the speaking lessons, students have choice to talk with their friends.
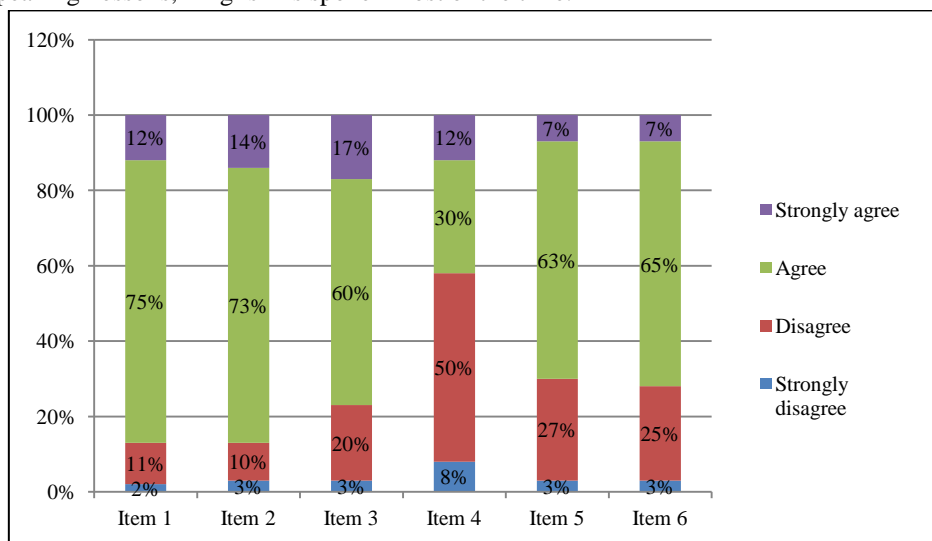   Item 6: In the speaking lessons, English is spoken most of the time.

Figure4.4:Students' attitude toward speaking lessons

As the result from the chart 4.4, it can be clear that most of the students (244 students – approximately 87 %) at Yen Phong number 1 and Yen Phong number 2 High School liked learning English speaking lessons and found English speaking lessons very interesting. Only over 10 percent of students had opposite answers. This meant that they had a different interest in learning speaking. The chart 4.4 also figured that speaking topics in textbook were not all interesting. More than 20 percent of students (65 students) expressed that they did not think all the topics were fascinating. Due to unfamiliar topics, they found difficult to express their opinion in English. The chart also evidenced that the number of English teachers at two high schools sometimes using the topics outside the textbook was fewer than those using only the topics in the textbook . The figure was clearly shown that there were around 42 percent (117 students) having answer Agree or Strong agree; however, up to 163 students (more than 50 percent had opposite answer. In addition, the result also showed that among the ten English teachers at the school, two or three of them used too much time to explain the speaking tasks instead of giving time for students to practice. However, more than 70 percent (202 students) agreed that their teachers let students practice speaking with their friends most time in the lessons. The data proved that English was mostly used in 10th grade English speaking lessons at two high schools. More than 72 percent agreed that the teachers gave them much time to speak in English, while only around 28 percent had different responds.

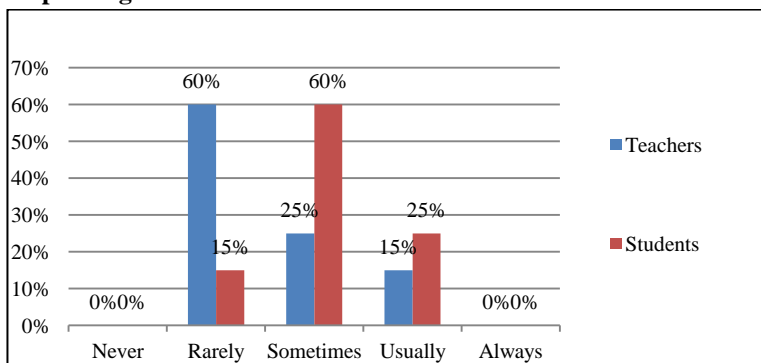**4.1.2.1.2. Using Vietnamese in speaking lessons**

Figure 4.5: Using Vietnamese in speaking lessons

Chart 4.5 showed clearly the frequency of using Vietnamese by the teachers and students in English speaking lessons. As can be seen from the chart, both teachers and students sometimes used Vietnamese in English periods. No students said that they always or never spoke Vietnamese. It could prove that English was mostly used in speaking lessons. Only 15 percent of teachers and 25 percent of students usually used Vietnamese. However, up to 60 percent of students sometimes used mother tongue and 15 percent of them rarely used it. It meant that there were a large number of students used Vietnamese in speaking lessons.

4.1.2.1.3. Students' reason for their interest in speaking lessons.
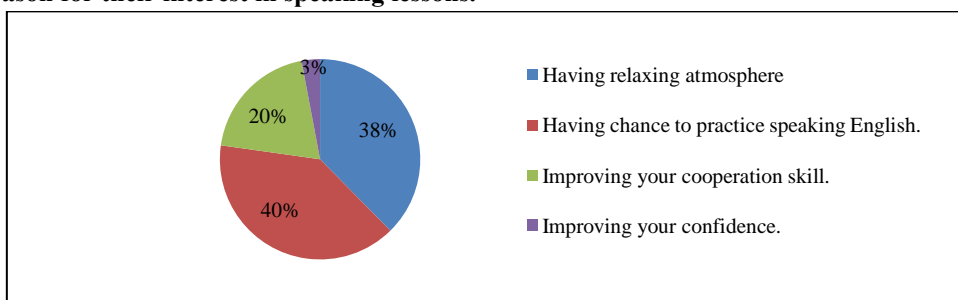

Figure 4.6: Students' reason for their interest in speaking lessons.

Figure 4.6 showed that the answers to this question were mostly the same. Most of the students (about 78 percent) said that they liked learning speaking lessons because they could have chances to practice speaking English with their friends and have relaxing atmosphere in speaking lessons. The others (around 22 percent) explained that speaking lessons could improving your cooperation skill and confidence. Although the majority of students were interested in learning speaking lessons, time for students' lesson preparation was not much. The result showed that 65 students (23 percent) had no time to prepare the lesson at home and only 10 percent of students spent 45 minutes doing this job. It was clear that although the number of students had lesson preparation, the time they spent for it was not much (only 15 minutes following by 140 students – 50 percent).

4.1.2.2. Students' attitudes toward communicative activities used in speaking lessons.
4.1.2.2.1. Teachers' frequency of using communicative activities
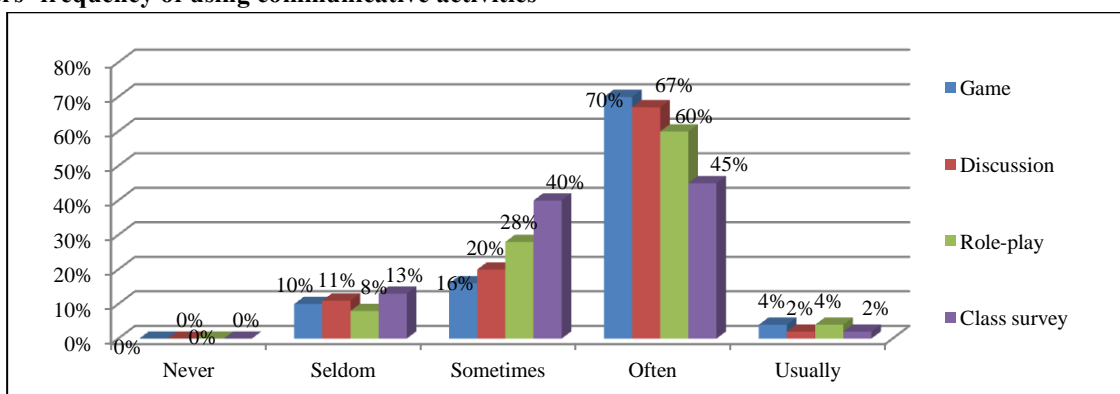

Figure 4.7: Teachers' frequency of using communicative activities

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Figure 4.7 was about the frequency of using Communicative activities by English teachers in their classes. It could be seen that Games, Discussions and Role-play were used more oftenthan the other: class surveys. More than 70 percent of students agreed that discussion was often used. In comparison with other activities, Class survey (45 percent) was often used the least in the speaking lesson. In general, teachers used all types of communicative activities in teaching speaking skill. However, Game and Discussion was applied in almost speaking activities and Role- play was also considered as a popular activity.

4.1.2.2.2. Students' preference of communicative activities and class arrangement
Table 4.4: Students' favorite communicative activities and class arrangement

Communicative activities	Game(%)	Discussion(%)	Role-Play(%)	Survey(%)
Result	40	30	20	10
Class arrangement	Individually(%)	Pair Work(%)	Group Work(%)	None(%)
Result	10	48	42	0

As result from the table 4.4, it was clear that the majority of the students (approximately 60 percent) chose Game and Role play for their favorite activities . About 30 percent of students chose Discussion and the fewest students chose Class survey which was a difficult activity. The table also showed the preference of class arrangement. It was clear thatmore than 90 percent (about 252 students) chose Pair work and group work as they could exchange their ideals as well as improve cooperation skill. The other students (about 28 students) liked working individually

4.1.2.2.3 .Students' attitudes toward communicative activities
In the questionnaires, there were 6 items aiming at exploring Students' opinion about communicative activities as follows:

   Item 1: Communicative activities attract students' attention in speaking lessons
   Item 2: In speaking lessons, you are usually asked to work in pairs or groups rather than individually.
   Item 3: You are given enough time to complete all tasks in speaking
   Item 4: You are always encouraged to speak English continually without caring mistakes on grammar and vocabulary
   Item 5: You are often asked to do survey on one topic in group and present in front of the class after some days
   Item 6: In speaking lessons, all students (not only excellent students) have chances to take part in communicative activities.
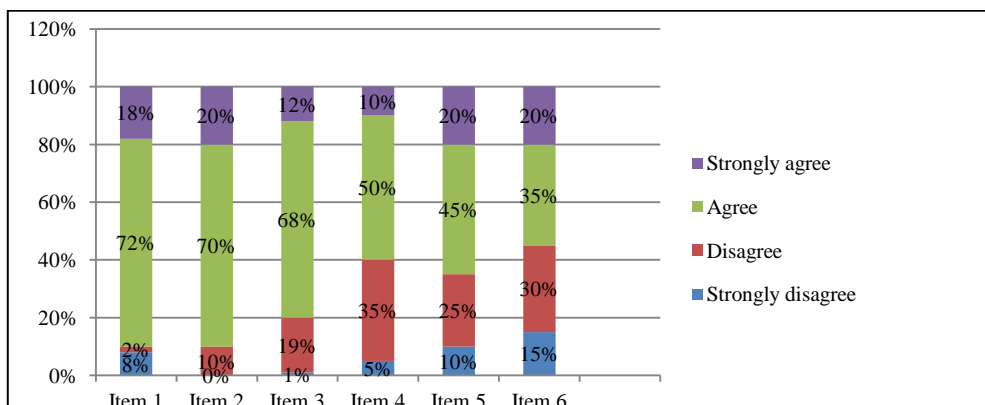

Figure 4.8: Students' attitudes toward communicative activities

Figure 4.8 showed clearly that most students felt more interested in the lessons used communicative activities. More than 252 students (about 90 %) choose "agree" or "strongly agree". Applying these activities in speaking lessons really encouraged students to take part in all activities in the class. Only some students choose "disagree" or "strongly disagree" because they were weak students in the class. The chart also proved that most of the teachers had their students work in pairs or groups rather than individually (based on 252 students' agreement – nearly 90 percent). The figure from the chart showed that a large number of students (224 students – 80 percent) thought that they had enough time to speak English in the class. Meanwhile, 56 students (20 percent)thought that their teachers should give them more time to practice because they explained that some lessons were too long or difficult. More than 60 percent of students - 168 students experienced that their teachers corrected their mistakes after practicing time while only about 40 percent of students – 112 students answered differently.

In addition, the chart also showed that most teachers asked students to do survey in group at home and presented it in front of the class. This activity was often used in project lessons. About 182 students(65 percent) agreed that they were required to prepare survey at home. Meanwhile, 98 students (35 percent) had different responses. Doing survey was actually a difficult task for weak students, so with these students teachers often asked them to make only some English sentence using simple vocabulary and

structures. Although there were a many students in one class, most students could take part in the communicative activities. About 154 students (55 percent) had the answer "agreed" and "strongly agree" and 126 students (45 percent) had different answer. It meant that there were many students who had no chance to take part in all speaking activities.

4.1.2.2.4. Students' difficulties when taking part in communicative activities.
Approximately 168 students (60 percent) said that they feel unconfident in talking before the others. They were afraid of making mistakes and the others made jokes about them. Another difficulty (about 20 percent) was that they had no ideals about speaking topics, so they couldn't practice with their friends. A few students had the other difficulties such as vocabulary limitation (15 percent), mispronouncing new words (3 percent) and absent partners (2 percent). They were the main reasons that made students not feel eager to the speaking lessons.

4.1.3. Result from class observation
Class observation was conducted on ten speaking lessons of unit1 (Family life) including five speaking lessons and five project lessons. The observation was aimed to realize the reality of teaching and learning English in speaking lessons in general and teachers' using communicative activities in speaking lessons in particular.
The teacher's teaching:*
The teachers' lesson plan was all well-prepared and had clear stages (pre-speaking, while-speaking and post-speaking) in speaking lessons. For five speaking lessons with the topic about household chores, all five teachers from two high schools use the method of Communicative Language Teaching to encourage students to talk with friends in English during the lessons. In project periods, the other teachers use flexibly methods Communicative Language Teaching and Project Based learning. Students in group of nine or ten made presentation after having seven days to do survey together. In these lessons, English was used most of the time, about 85 percent. The teachers tried to use English as much as possible in all activities. They only used Vietnamese to explain the requirement for weak students after giving instruction in English but students still didn't understand . All teachers monitored students and encouraged them to take part in all activities in the lesson. However, because of limited time, two project lessons were also not finished in time among ten lessons.
The use of communicative activities:*
Teachers used communicative activities flexibly in ten periods. Most activities were in the textbook and some were designed by teachers. For five speaking lessons, all teachers used Game, Discussion and Role play. Game was given in Warm up part to create interesting climate and motivate students in new lessons. Discussion was used in all five lessons because it was an useful activity to help students have more chances to practice speaking in pairs or in group. Role play was used in activity 2, activity 3, which let students ask and answer about household chores students liked or disliked.
For project lesson, all five teachers used Class survey as main activity. Students had about one week to do survey in groups and presented in front of the whole class in Looking back and Project lesson. Project was one part of Looking back and project lesson in one unit, so it had only around twenty-five minutes to complete. In general, all ten lessons were interesting and draw students' attention because teachers prepared the lesson plan carefully and used communicative activities flexibly in project lessons . However, each class consisted of over forty five students, some students had no chance to speak English and some students couldn't take part in discussion activity due to their weak ability.
The students' participation:*
Students were pretty responsive and they were willing to participate in the activities. However, some students spoke not loud enough, some felt hesitated to speak and few distracted from all activities. In warm up, all ten teachers designed games which involved almost all students. In activity 1, two teachers let students work in pairs, two teachers used group work and only one teacher ask students work individually. Not all students (about 50 percent) participated in this activity. In activity 2, all five teachers let students work in pairs. Because time for this activity was around 12 minutes, nearly half of the total students had chance to participate. In activity 3, students were required to make up similar conversation in activity 2, but students had to practice with partner without looking at textbook. Because of limited time, only five pairs had chance to practice. Generally, in five speaking lessons, all teachers tried to use communicative activities effectively. However, each class consisted of over forty five students with different levels and time for each period was only forty five minutes, only two third of students took part in communicative activities. For project lessons, which lasted only twenty five minutes, teachers firstly instructed students how to present and after that students presented their survey by showing power point. Due to limited time, students' presentation didn't have much information. For survey, not all members in their group had chance to present.
In short, in both speaking lessons and project lessons, communicative activities were applied flexibly. However, owing to short time and big classes, there were some students who didn'ttake part in these activities.

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4.1.4. Result from interview

The interviews were done in the cooperation of ten grade 10th students. The data collected aimed to illustrate five main points as *following*

4.1.4.1. Attitudes toward using Game, Discussion, Role-play and Class survey inteaching speaking skill.

Often students, nine students expressed that they liked communicative activities used in speaking lessons. They can improve vocabulary, social knowledge, critical thinking, confidence and cooperation skill. Only one said that he did not like those activities because he thought that they took a lot of time and he preferred doing grammar exercises than talking with friends

4.1.4.2. Preference of communicative activities: Game, Discussion, Role-play orClass survey and reasons.

Six students chose Game and Role play, because they said that these activities were quite easy and interesting. They could learn in relaxing way. They had chances to talk with their friends and felt more confident in speaking lessons. One third of students chose Discussion for their favorite activities since they had chances to practice speaking with friends, after that their speaking skill will be improved. Only one person chose Class survey because he thought that this activity had a lot of benefits for students such as critical thinking, vocabulary, cooperation and social knowledge.

4.1.4.3. The most effective kind of class arrangements in speaking lesson (individually, pairs work and group work).

Students said that the teachers let them work in pairs more often than in groups or individually, and seven of ten students had opinion that they preferred working in pairs to working in groups. In fact, it was the most effective class arrangements because they could exchange more ideas as well as learnt from friends. Moreover, they had chances to cooperate with their friends in practicing speaking English and built their confidence in communicating. Only three of ten students chose group work because this kind of class arrangement helped them improve cooperation skills, enrich vocabulary and exchange ideals. No one chose working individually in learning speaking lessons. Students' answers proved that they really liked working in pairs or groups.

4.1.4.4. Problems in learning speaking lessons.

Five students said that they felt unconfident to talk before others. They felt shy, were afraid of making mistakes so they didn't want to take part much in speaking activities. Three students answered that they found a lot of new words which they didn't know how to use or pronounce correctly. Therefore, they had difficulties in expressing their ideals in English. Two students thought that their problems were ideals about the speaking topic which were sometimes about social issues or science knowledge. These topic required students to search a lot of information, so they often had few ideas to talk about them. Only one student said that her difficulties in speaking lessons was that they didn't have enthusiastic partner, which made them unmotivated to all activities in the class.

4.1.4.5. Solution to the problems in speaking lessons.

Half of students said that they tried to participate in all activities in the class, so they had chance to practice speaking English. They wouldn't feel worried to speak English in front of others. These students approved that finding vocabulary, searching information related to the speaking topic helped them have a good presentation in English. Three of ten students agreed that they could overcome these difficulties by asking their teachers for help when they didn't know what and how to do. Teachers would gave them clear explanation and some suggestion about the tasks. One student said that he got away from the difficulty by preparing the speaking lesson well at home. He thought of the exercises carefully, read the reference or completed all tasks in text book before class. It made him understand more about the lessons and helped him feel more confident to join all communicative activities in the class. Only one of ten students had no answer because English wasn't his favorite subject.

4.2. Discussions

This section aimed to discuss the results in the study. The collected data will be discussed to illustrate for research questions.

By analyzing the results of class questionnaires, observation, and interviews together with comparing with theory in methodology, it could be figured out the types of communicative activities used in speaking activities, opinions of teachers and students about these activities and some difficulties in applying the communicative activities in each lesson at Yen Phong number 1 and Yen phong number 2 High School.

4.2.1.Types of communicative activities used in speaking lessons:

It can be seen that Game, Discussion, Role-play and Class survey were mainly used in speaking lessons. Although, the level of students was different, teachers could apply these activities flexibly. Most of the teachers used Game and Role play in their speaking lessons because they could attract students' attention and improve students' confidence as well as motivated students to speak English. Some games used effectively in the speaking lessons were Who am i, Hang man, Crossword and Lucky numbers. Role - play activity gave students opportunities to practice speaking English in real situation, for example in Unit 1 of English Grade 10th, students talked about what chores they liked or disliked basing on the examples in the book. Students could find the

tasks of the lessons easy and eager to participate in the activity. Besides, discussion was also often used to help students exchange their ideals so that students could improve their cooperation skills.

It was class survey that teachers sometimes applied effectively because it was considered a difficult activity. Class survey required students work in group and did survey on one social issue related to the topic of each unit. Therefore, for the class with many weak students, teachers often changed the requirement of the task. Instead of doing survey, the weak students just prepared some simple sentences individually and present in the class after that.

4.2.2. Attitudes of both Teachers and Students toward communicative activities*:*

Through the result from investigating, both teachers and students agreed that the communicative activities were very important in speaking lessons. Teachers responded that they used these activities to make the lessons more interesting. Therefore, students could be encouraged to take part in all activities in the class. It was obvious that the quality of teaching and learning speaking lessons would be improved. As the data from survey, it could be clear that all teachers could use selected kinds of communicative activities in their classes which were appropriate for students.

Moreover, most of the students expressed their agreement that the lessons became more interesting thanks to the activities. These activities might "wake them up" after some boring lessons. The figures from the survey showed that around 96 percent of students agreed that communicative activities attracted students' attention in speaking lessons. About 90 percent of students said that they always had chances to work in pairs or groups. These activities helped them feel more confident and eager to take part in the lessons. It meant that communicative activities really made the speaking lessons successful.

It could be concluded that both teachers and students appreciated the role of communicative activities in speaking lessons. Thanks to these activities the target of the speaking lessons would be achieved and students could improve speaking skill.

4.2.3. Difficulties in applying communicative activities:

Applying communicative activities in grade 10th students' English speaking classes at the school also faced some certain difficulties.

The first challenge was the limited time in one period. Time for each period was only 45 minutes while teachers had many activities to complete. Actually, all speaking lessons in the text book often included three or four activities. In only 45 minutes, teachers couldn't complete four or even more than four activities in time. Moreover, a speaking lesson always must have enough stages: pre, while and post speaking. Most of the time was for while-speaking stage when the students practiced speaking. However, teachers sometimes spent much time for such other stages as pre-speaking and post-speaking. Therefore, lacking time for these situation was unavoidable.

Another difficulty was the lack of students' motivation. Some students were unwilling to participate in activities. They only completed the speaking task because they had to do teachers' requirement while they didn't want to join the tasks. Some students were not interested in some topics which were unfamiliar with them. Together with their losing of interest, they might be lack of vocabulary to talk about these topics. Besides, some students felt shy or unconfident when speaking in front of other people. Some others were afraid of making mistakes , others didn't find suitable partner and the others were weak students in the class. All these reasons made students not have enough motivation in practicing speaking English.

The setting of the class was also a difficulty for the teachers in applying communicative activities. As observation, the classroom was quite small, and the desks were placed closely. This arrangement caused the difficulties for the teachers in carrying out the activities and the students had the obstacle in their movement. In some activities like class survey that required the students to move away from their seat, the closely-placed desks prevented them from moving. Therefore they sometimes just stood up and talked to someone around them. This caused obstacle to the application of communicative activities.

Besides, teaching and learning in big classes was really a challenge for teachers. Teachers found difficult to apply communicative activities for all students as well as in all classes. Each class in high schools in Bac Ninh had from 45 to 50 students with different levels. Some students were much more excellent than some others and about one third of students were bad. Therefore, applying activities in speaking lessons sometimes was not easy for teachers. Teachers couldn't pay attention to all students in the class , so some students didn't have chances to take part in communicative activities.

Last but not least, teachers and students sometimes used Vietnamese in the class that was also a problem in speaking lessons. In order to explain the requirement of difficult tasks, Vietnamese was sometimes used to help students understand the lesson clearly. Moreover, students also used Vietnamese in discussion. The main reasonswere in students' knowledge and content of tasks in the textbook. There were so many new words and many tasks in one lesson which students must master. The cognitive ability of some students was limited, so there would be some tasks students could hardly understand in English. In this case, teachers had to explain the requirement in Vietnamese, which actually was not accepted in applying communicative activities.

4.3. Suggested solutions

To improve the effectiveness of applying communicative activities in English speaking classes of 10th grade at two high schools, some suggested solutions are given as following.

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- Teachers should control the time in all activities, give priority to students' practice, let students work in pairs or groups and reduce time used in other stages like pre-teaching vocabulary. Because each lesson is always 45 minutes in length, the teachers cannot teach the lessons in 2 or more periods for example. However, the teachers might teach vocabulary by giving students handouts instead of spending time for them to copy. Moreover, teachers can ask students to prepare the lesson at home and review old lessons, which helps students understand the lesson more clearly so that teachers don't need to spend much time explaining the requirement of the lesson in the class.

- Teachers should use more pair work or group work than individually because they can encourage students to participate in all speaking activities. For what topics the students were not familiar and might lack of vocabulary to talk, the teacher could suitable topics, support ideas and provide students with vocabulary related to the topics to help students practice speaking . Besides, the teachers might select useful techniques to encourage students' interaction in pairs or in groups. Teachers can design some more games such as lucky game, crossword, who want to become a millionaire, etc. These activities can encourage students to participate in the lesson. Last but not least, teachers should reward students who have right answers or good presentation. Rewarding students is a good way to improve students' motivation in learning.

- Teachers should rearrange the tables in the class in order to make more spaces for students to move easily. Besides, teachers could mix students with different levels in one pair or one group. In these pairs or groups, excellent students can help their weaker friends. Moreover, teachers should often change members of groups in order that students can share ideals with all their classmates. Therefore, students feel eager to take part in all activities and obviously not feel passive. It is clear that pair work or group work can make students more active in speaking lessons.

- Crowded classes are really a challenge for teachers to apply communicative activities. The solutions to this problem are that teachers should consider a suitable type of class arrangement. Some activities might be appropriate with pair work while some might be done well with group work. Teachers also look over the content of the lesson and consider students' competence so as to adjust the tasks and time appropriately. Teachers should design easier tasks so that weak students in the class can easily complete them. Besides, teachers should mix students with different levels in one group in order that advanced students can help weak students. Asking students to prepare the lesson at home is a good way to help students approach the new lesson effectively. In addition, teachers should usually reward enthusiastic students. By this way, students feel eager to join all activities in the classes.

- To help students use mostly English in the class, teachers should consider the language used in explaining the speaking tasks. They are short and clear sentences. If the language used is too long and complicated, students might not comprehend . The teachers have to spend time to explain in English in an easy way. Teachers should use short English sentences and use instruction in English everyday which helps students be familiar with speaking and listening English. With the difficult words or tasks, teachers should explain to students in easy way in English. That helps students have habit of using English every day. Therefore, students can limit using Vietnamese in the class.

In short, all communicative activities were used flexibly in speaking lessons to stimulate students' interest and participation. Actually, these activities helped students improve speaking skills in terms of confidence, vocabulary, structures, cooperation and social knowledge.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

This part summarized the investigation into the real situation of using communicative activities in teaching English speaking skill at high schools in Bac Ninh province. The study investigated the reality of teaching and learning English in speaking lessons of grade 10[th]students at two high schools in Bac Ninh. Besides, some types of communicative activities were found out to be used in these classes' speaking lessons. By summing up and analyzing the result from three research instruments that are questionnaires, class observation and interviews , the researcher pointed out the opinions of teachers and students about communicative activities as well as some difficulties in applying these activities . The study proved that teachers used Game, Discussion and Role play more than Class survey. Applying these activities was flexible and dependent upon the cognitive ability of students. Another finding from the survey was that both teachers and students felt interested in using communicative activities in speaking lessons. In the effort of carrying out various methods of research, the study explored the difficulties in the application of communicative for grade 10th students' English speaking classes at two high schools. The first difficulty was in time for each lesson. It was not enough to complete all activities. The second difficulty was students' participations in the activities. Because of students' motivation, cognitive ability as well as big classes, some students had no chance to practice speaking English. The last difficulty realized was sometimes using Vietnamese in the class. With these findings, the researcher hoped that they could help the teachers and students at two high schools improve their quality of teaching and learning English, especially speaking skill.

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Suggested for further research

The researcher hoped that they would help other researchers with some useful experiences in their further related studies. Researchers should observe more English speaking classes in different grades in high schools. Besides, researchers should interview more students. This would give a lot of objective information about the study. It is advisable that a larger and further research should be undertaken with more participants in different grades in other skills such as listening or writing skills.

Limitations of the study

In spite of the researcher's great effort to finish the study, limitations were not avoidable. The first one was the limit of observing teachers' teaching. There were ten periods observed but they were the same lessons, five lessons were speaking lesson of unit 1and other five lessons were project part of unit 1. Secondly, questionnaires were carried out not very well. The responses of questionnaires online were collected insufficiently. Moreover, the interview was limited. The researcher only interviewed ten students from two high schools, so the answers were not highly persuasive. Those were all the limitations of the study. Finally, the survey was done at only two high schools in Bac Ninh provinces, so the results couldn't show exactly the reality of using these communicative activities at all high schools in Bac Ninh. These factors made the restriction in summing up the results.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRES
QUESTIONNAIRES FOR TEACHERS
The purpose of the questions is to find out what types of communicative activities teachers often use , how teachers use these activities in teaching speaking skill and their opinions about the Communicative activities.

Mark X for your answer
1. What are communicative activities used in speaking lessons?

Activities	Your answer
Game	
Discussion	
Role-play	
Class survey	

2. How often do you use the following activities in speaking lessons?
On a 1-to-5 scale, where 1 is the LOWEST and 5 is the HIGHEST:
 5. Always
　　　　　　4. Often
　　　　　　3. Sometimes
　　　　　　2. Rarely
　　　　　　1. Never
Mark X for your answer.

Activities	1	2	3	4	5
Game					
Discussion					
Role-play					
Class survey					

3. What are popular activities chosen by students?

Activities	Your answer
Game	
Discussion	
Role-play	
Class survey	

4. What communicative activities do you think is the most effective?
A. Game 　　　B. Discussion 　　　C. Role-play 　　　D. Class survey
5. Why do you think that the activity is the most effective?
A. Encourage students to work in pairs or groups
B. Improve students' critical thinking
C. Improve students' vocabulary and grammar.
D. Improve students' confidence in speaking
6. What types of class arrangement do you usually use in speaking lessons?

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Types of class arrangement	Your answer
Individually	
Pair work	
Group work	

7. How often do you use the following types of class arrangement?

On a 1-to-5 scale, where 1 is the LOWEST and 5 is the HIGHEST:

   5. Always

   4. Often

   3. Sometimes

   2. Rarely

 1. Never

Mark X for your answer.

Types of class arrangement	1	2	3	4	5
Individually					
Pair work					
Group work					

8. What will you do to help students complete the task of each activity?

A. Explain the task in Vietnamese

B. Explain the task in an easy way in English

C. Give more examples

D. Use a variety of class arrangements.

E. Be students' advisor rather than controller.

F. Give students suitable time for each task

9. What difficulties do you have when using communicative activities in speaking lessons?

A. Lack of time   B. Students' different levels

C. Lack of students' motivation   D. Students' shyness

E. Students' fear of making mistakes   F. A big class.

G. Not enough spaces in classrooms   H. Poor facilities

10. How often do you lack time when teaching?

A. Always   B. Usually   C. Sometimes   D. Rarely   E. Never

11. What will you do to overcome these difficulties?

A. Revise the suitable content of the lesson.

B. Omit difficult task in textbook

C. Design easier tasks

D. Reward enthusiastic students in the class

E. Use a variety of teaching techniques

F. Work as an instructor, adviser and a controller.

G. Divide the class into pairs or groups

H. Rearrange the classroom to help students move easily

12. How often do you ask students to prepare the speaking lessons at home?

A. Always   B. Usually   C. Sometimes   D. Rarely   E. Never

13. How often do you design more activities in speaking lessons?

A. Always   B. Usually   C. Sometimes   D. Rarely   E. Never

14. What is your opinion about using communicative activities?

A.   Attract students and help target of the lesson be gained.

B.   Attract students but can hardly help the lesson be completed

C.   Can hardly be applied in classes with a lot of students

D.   Don't encourage students to participate in speaking activities.

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR STUDENTS:

The purpose of the questions is to collect students' attitudes toward speaking lessons in general and communicative activities in particular. Therefore, the questions consists of two parts as following:

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PART 1: This part is aimed to collect students' opinions about speaking lessons. It includes ten questions as following.

From question number 1 to question number 6, **Mark X for your answer**

On a 1-to-4 scale, where 1 is the LOWEST and 4 is the HIGHEST:

1.Strongly disagree

2.Disagree

3.Agree

4.Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4
1. You like all activities in speaking lessons.				
2. Speaking lessons are interesting.				
3. You feel fascinated with the speaking topics in the textbook.				
4. Your teacher sometimes gives topics outside the textbook.				
5. In the speaking lessons, students have choice to talk with their friends				
6. In the speaking lessons, English is spoken most of the time.				

From question number 7 to question number 10, Circle your answer

7. How often does your teacher use Vietnamese in the speaking lessons?

A. Never   B. rarely   C. sometimes   D. usually   E. always

8. How often do you use Vietnamese in the speaking lessons?

A. Never   B. rarely   C. sometimes   D. usually   E. always

9. How much time do you spend preparing a speaking lesson before class?

A. 15 minutes   B. 30 minutes   C. 45 minutes   D. No time

10. What do you like best about the speaking lessons?

A. Having relaxing atmosphere.

B. Having chance to practice speaking English.

C. Improving your cooperation skill.

D. Improving your confidence.

PART 2

The aim of this part is to investigate students' attitudes toward communicative activities used in speaking lessons. It consists of 10 questions as following:

1. How often does your teacher use the following activities in speaking lessons?

   On a 1-to-5 scale, where 1 is the LOWEST and 5 is the HIGHEST:

          5. Usually4. Often3. Sometimes2. Seldom1. Never

Mark X for your answer.

Activities	1	2	3	4	5
Game					
Discussion					
Role-play					
Class survey					

2. What activities do you like best?

   A. Game   B. Discussion   C. Role-play   D. Survey

3. What types of class arrangement do you like best?

  A. Individually   B. Pair work   C. Group work   D. None of them

Question: 4-9

From question number 4 to question number 9, **Mark X for your answer**

On a 1-to-4 scale, where 1 is the LOWEST and 4 is the HIGHEST:

1 Strongly 2 disagree 3 Disagree4 Agree 5 Strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4
4. Communicative activities attract students' attention in speaking lessons.				
5. In speaking lessons, you are usually asked to work in pairs or groups rather than individually.				
6.You are given enough time to complete all tasks in speaking				
7. You are always encouraged to speak English continually without caring mistakes on grammar and vocabulary				
8. You are often asked to do survey on one topic in group and present in front of the class after some days				
9. In speaking lessons, all students (not only excellent students) have chances to take part in communicative activities				

10. What difficulties do you have when you take part in communicative activities?

   A. mispronounce new words

   B. vocabulary limitation.

   C. lack of confidence

   D. absent partner

   E. no ideas about the speaking topic

APPENDIX 2: CLASS OBSERVATION

   Name of teacher: ………………………………………………………

   Lesson: ………………………………………………………………

   Class: ……………………………………………………………

   Date: …………………………………………………………………

Observation	Take notes
1. The teacher's teaching - Lesson plan: ☐ Well- prepared ☐ Not well- prepared - Method: ☐ Project Based Learning ☐ Communicative Language Teaching ☐ Audio Lingual Method - Procedure: ☐ Enough 3 stages (pre, while, post) ☐ Not enough 3 stages - Time: ☐ Enough time ☐ Over time ☐ Lack of time - Language ☐ Most English ☐ Most Vietnamese	
2. The use of communicative activities - Types of activities: ☐ Game ☐ Discussion	

☐ Role play ☐ Class survey - Types of class arrangement: ☐ Individually ☐ Pair work ☐ Group work - Effectiveness of Communicative activities: ☐ Very useful ☐ Useful ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very useful ☐ Not useful at all	
3. The students' participation in all activities **-Activity 1:** ☐ All students ☐ Most students ☐ Some students ☐ None of students **-Activity 2:** ☐ All students ☐ Most students ☐ Some students ☐ None of students **-Activity 3:** ☐ All students ☐ Most students ☐ Some students ☐ None of students **-Activity 4:** ☐ All students ☐ Most students ☐ Some students ☐ None of students	
Other notes:	

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW.

Researcher prepares five questions to interview students with the purpose of investigating students' opinion about speaking lessons as well as communicative activities used in these lessons

1. What do you think of using Game, Discussion, Role-play and Class survey speaking lessons ?

2. What kind of communicative activities (Game, Discussion, Role-play or Class survey) do you like the most? Why?

3. What kind of class arrangements (individually, pairs work and group work) do you think the most effective in speaking lesson?

4. What problems do you have in learning speaking lessons?

5. How do you overcome the problems?