Part A

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

English, which is being taught in many schools and universities in Vietnam now, has become an international language in many areas: science and technology, business and commerce, international relations and diplomacy. In recent years, with the national policy of renovation and expansion of international relations, there has been an increasing need for learning English in Vietnam.

To meet the demand of learners of English, teachers of English in Vietnam have been trying to find out the most suitable and effective method of teaching English. They always try to catch up with the world’s latest frameworks of English Language Teaching. Therefore, as in other countries, teachers of English in Vietnam are now using Communicative Language Teaching Approach to teach English to learners of all levels. They hope that by using this teaching method, they can help their learners improve their English and use it effectively and fluently in communication. That is also the idea suggested by many linguists and methodologists such as Nunan, 1991 and Das, B.K, 1985.

Most of the students at the People’s Police Academy (the PPA) who took part in the survey conducted in this study agree that the ability to express themselves freely in communication is of great importance for their future career as many of them - the future administrative police, traffic police, etc - will surely have to work with foreigners.

However, there still exist many difficulties facing English Language teachers in Vietnam in general and English Language teachers at the PPA in particular. Many Vietnamese learners can write and read English quite well but they cannot speak fluently and correctly in communication.

Certainly there are many reasons for this. After teaching in two non-language universities in Hanoi for about a year, I have recognized some big obstacles which prevent English Language teachers and learners in Vietnam from reaching their aims. These obstacles are: large and heterogeneous classes, students’ low level of English language proficiency,
students’ low motivation, etc. Unfortunately, this is not only the situation in these two universities but also the case for many other non-language universities in Vietnam.

This has given me the desire to conduct a research to clarify the teaching and learning English speaking skill as well as to find techniques and activities to improve the quality of the teaching of speaking skill at the People’s Police Academy where I work constantly.

2. Aims of the study

The study is aimed at:

- Investigating the current reality of the teaching and learning of speaking skill at the PPA
- Identifying the difficulties and obstacles that the teachers and learners of pre-intermediate level of English language proficiency at the PPA encounter when teaching and learning speaking skill.
- Suggesting some techniques and activities with the hope of helping English language teachers at the PPA improve the quality of their teaching, which later helps improve students’ learning quality.

3. Scope of the study

The study focuses on the difficulties that the English language teachers meet when teaching speaking skill to non-English major students of pre-intermediate level of English language proficiency at the PPA and some suggested techniques and activities which help them improve the quality of their teaching.

The study of difficulties, techniques and activities of other skills and levels would be beyond the scope of the study.

4. Methods of the study

In order to realize the aims of the study, quantitative method was used. Two survey questionnaires were used to collect information and evidence for the study.

- The first survey questionnaire was for 150 non-English major students of pre-intermediate level of English language proficiency at the PPA
The second one was for 9 English language teachers of Department of Foreign Languages – The PPA

All comments, remarks and recommendations given in the study were based on the data analysis.

5. Design of the study

The study consists of 3 parts:

Part A: Introduction which presents the rationale, the aims, the scope, the method and the design of the study.

Part B: Development which consists of 3 chapters
- Chapter I - Literature Review - deals with the concepts relevant to the study: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language skills, oral communication, speaking skill, the use of CLT in teaching speaking and prior studies related to the topic.
- Chapter II - Practical Research - provides an analysis on the current situation of teaching and learning speaking skill at the PPA. Data collection and findings are also presented in this chapter.
- Chapter III - Findings and Recommendations - focuses on difficulties facing teachers and students in teaching and learning speaking skill and suggested techniques and activities for teachers to improve their teaching.

Part C: Conclusion summarizes all the key issues as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for further study and suggestions for further study.
Part B

DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter briefly covers the theories related to the study: Communicative Language Teaching, Language Skills, Oral communication and speaking skill. In addition, it also mentions some prior studies related to the topic.

1.1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

In its history, language teaching has witnessed many changes in teaching methodology. In his book *Understanding Foreign Language Teaching Methodology*, Le Van Canh (2004) claims that the changes in the second language teaching in general and the changes in English language teaching in particular are not the changes in the way we teach. These are the changes in the aims of language teaching and learning.

In the past, foreign language teaching was aimed at enabling learners to read and write. Learners who had good reading and writing abilities were considered good learners. That’s the reason why for a very long time, grammar translation method, which makes learners become structure competent and communicative incompetent, was widely used.

Nowadays, the aim of foreign language teaching has changed from structure competence into communicative competence. At the moment, the ability to express one’s self freely and confidently in communication is the desire of any foreign language learners. As mentioned above, the changes in the aim of language teaching will lead to the changes in teaching methodology. To meet the demands of learners, many methodologists have tried their best to find the most appropriate and effective way to teach English. As a result, many teaching methods have come into being. These methods are: Grammar-translation method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method, Audio-visual method and Communicative language teaching – currently the most widely-used one.

Although among these methods, many have not been in vogue for quite a long time, they still exist in one form or another simply because each method has its own strong points and weak points. As each language skill, component, item, etc has its own characteristics and
different groups of learners learn things differently, there does not exist a one-fit-all method – a method that is suitable to teach all kinds of learners, all kinds of grammatical items, contents, skills, etc.

1.1.1. Concept of CLT

Communicative Language Teaching which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s is currently the most favourite and the most widely-used method in English language classes in Vietnam.

Different authors view CLT differently. However, most definitions of CLT come under its weak version which emphasizes the importance of opportunities to use English for communicative purposes. Among the available definitions, the one given by Nunan (1989) seems to be the most widely-accepted and the most favourable one. As for him, “CLT views language as a system for the expressions of meaning. Activities involve oral communication, carrying out meaning tasks and using language, which is meaningful to the learners. Objectives reflect the needs of the learner including functional skills as well as linguistic objectives.” Nunan also asserts that in communication process, learners are negotiators and integrators whereas teachers are facilitators.

1.1.2. Characteristics of CLT

Language is not simply a system of rules. It is now generally seen “as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning” (Nunan, 1989). This point of view really supports CLT.

In general, CLT has the following characteristics:

➢ Communicative Language Teaching is aimed at (a) making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (b) developing procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. (Le Van Canh, 2004).

➢ The goal of CLT is to create a realistic context for language acquisition in the classroom to develop Hymes’ notion of communicative competence.

➢ CLT is also associated with learner-centered and experienced based tasks

➢ The focus of CLT is on functional language usage and learner’s ability to express themselves. In other words, for CLT, developing learners’ skills is more important than the content of the teaching and learning (Johnson 1982).
There are 3 major principles of CLT:

1. **communication principle**: emphasizes activities that involve real communication and promote learning.

2. **task principle**: purports that activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.

3. **Meaningfulness principle**: claims that language that is meaningful to the learners supports the learning process.

(Le Van Canh, 2004)

In communicative classes, learners communicate with each other and learning tasks are completed by means of interaction between learners. It is clear that learners’ completing a task is fore-grounded and communicating with each other is back-grounded. This may lead to considerable use of pair work, group work and mingling activities.

In ESL classes, teachers are facilitators and monitors, usually, without interruption and then to provide feedback on the success.

However, CLT is not a perfect method. There still exist critical remarks on CLT like: its inappropriateness to local contexts and cultures; its negation of rote-learning, memorization, displaying questions, teacher’s talk, etc.

In spite of its limitations and shortcomings, no one can negate that Communicative Language Teaching allows teachers to incorporate motivating and purposeful communicative activities and principles into their teaching, which later results in the improvement of their learners’ proficiency.

For the reasons mentioned above, CLT has served as the dominant approach to language teaching since the demise of the Audio-lingual Method.

1.1.3. **Communicative Competence**

In the history of English language teaching, there have been two definitions of communicative competence which is currently considered the primary goal of language teaching.
Many teachers, methodologists and linguists who work on foreign language teaching tend to define communicative competence simply as interaction in the target language (Savignon, 1983; Rivers, 1987).

However, others who work in ESL tend to be in favour of Hymes’ theory of communicative competence. In Hymes’ theory (adapted from Das, B.K 1985), communicative competence include not only the linguistic forms of the language but also its social rules, the knowledge of when, how and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms. It means that the socio-cultural rules for language use are also included in the teaching process.

In fact, Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky’s theory of competence. In Chomsky’s view, linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-hearer in a completely homogeneous speech community who can use its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatical irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest and errors in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky, 1965 – adapted from Le Van Canh 2004). This means that, Chomsky’s linguistic view focuses too much on the “correctness” but does not pay adequate attention to the socio-culture of language.

It is clear that Hymes’ theory of communicative competence offers a much more comprehensive view than Chomsky’s.

Beside the two common definitions mentioned above, Canale and Swain (1980) suggest that communicative competence is the combination of the competences in five areas: rules of grammar (grammatical competence), rules of discourse (discourse competence), socio-cultural rules of use, probability rules of occurrence and communication strategies.

(1) **Grammatical competence**: This competence is the knowledge of lexical items and the rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar, semantics and phonology. A person’s grammatical competence is shown by his use, not by his statement of rules. In oral or written communication, levels of grammatical accuracy are required.

(2) **Discourse competence** includes the ability to produce and recognize coherent and cohesive text. Discourse competence is dependent on the knowledge shared by speaker/writer and hearer/reader: knowledge of the real word, knowledge of the linguistic code, knowledge of the discourse structures and knowledge of social setting.
(3) Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to produce and recognize socially appropriate language within a given socio-cultural context. In other words, it is the ability to interpret and express functional and social meanings of language, depending on degrees of formality, setting, topic, channel and purposes of communication.

(4) Probability rules of occurrence: This competence is the ability to recognize what communication functions are likely to be expressed in a given context and what are not. A person can acquire more of this competence through using the language in real communication than in classroom practice. According to Canale and Swain (1980), a learner cannot have a satisfactory communicative competence if not any of his knowledge of probability of occurrence of grammatical forms and communicative functions is developed.

(5) Communicative strategies are of great use in case one’s knowledge of rules is imperfect. This competence also includes the ability to adapt when one’s message is not taken and to sustain communication by paraphrase, circum-locution, hesitation, avoidance, guessing and shift in register and style.

Richards (1983) views communication strategies as including: (a) speaker’s repertoire of verbal and visual gestures which signal interest in what the partner is saying such as “really, yeah, mmm.”; (b) speaker’s stock of topics and formulaic utterances which are produced at relevant points in discourse such as small talk which is required to make brief encounters with acquaintances comfortable and positive and (c) awareness when to talk and what to talk in an appropriate use of turn-taking conversations.

It is clear that Canale and Swain’s framework of communicative competence is really useful for language teachers who take Communicative Language Teaching as their teaching method to decide on what and how to organize tasks.

1.1.4. Conditions of applying CLT

1.1.4.1. Authentic materials

In order to learn a language, learners need as much as possible to hear and read the language as native speakers use it. Therefore, access to authentic materials is of great importance for learners. When talking about authentic materials, people often assume that they are only newspaper and magazine articles. However, the term can also encompass
such things as songs, radio & TV broadcasts, films, leaflets, flyers, posters, indeed anything written in the target language and used unedited in the classroom. Nowadays, the World Wide Web is a fruitful resource for authentic materials. Naturally, certain texts will lend themselves more easily to certain levels.

For learners with lower level of proficiency, leaflets, timetables, menus, short headline type reports, audio and video advertising, or short news broadcasts may be a perfect match. For those with more intermediate levels, this list could be expanded to include longer articles, four or five minute TV or radio news reports, a higher quantity of shorter items, or even whole TV programmes.

To make the full use of authentic materials, before providing them to learners, teachers should make them accessible by:

- reviewing them carefully to ensure that the level is appropriate;
- introducing relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures in advance;
- providing context by describing the content and typical formats for the type of material.

1.1.4.2. Teachers

Beside authentic materials, teachers’ role is also a very important component in applying CLT into English Language Teaching (ELT). In ELT classes, teachers are not only facilitators but also managers of classroom activities. It is teachers who establish situations to promote communication. They also give advice, answer learners’ questions and monitor learners’ performance. In addition, sometimes teachers are co-communicators who engage in the communicative activities along with learners. It is true to say that teachers give learners chances to express themselves by having them share their ideas and opinions. As for Littlewood (1981), this helps learners integrate the target language with their own personality and feel more emotionally secure with it.

It is clear that teachers have many roles, however, they need to try hard and to be supported to fulfill these roles. They should have adequate knowledge of CLT, they should have chances to access the authentic materials, etc. For those who never or rarely attend any courses on CLT, training and retraining in CLT is necessary as teachers’ competence decides the success or failure of applying CLT in ELT.
1.2. Language skills

It is known that language communication involves four macro inter-related skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teaching and learning of a foreign language is, in fact, the teaching and learning of the linguistic components (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) through practising the four language skills. Therefore, in order to master a foreign language, learners must have an adequate mastery of all the four skills mentioned above. However, the degree of fluency of each skill is different for different learners depending on their course purposes.

Byrne (1988) divides the four language skills into two groups. The first group, which consists of listening and reading, is the group of receptive skills. The second one – the group of productive skills – consists of speaking and writing.

Additionally, speaking and listening skills are also named oral skills due to the manners by which they are formed (they are related to articulator organs). Reading and writing skills are called literacy skills as they connect with manual script.

1.3. Oral communication

Communication between human is a complex and ever changing process. When communication takes place, speakers/ writers feel the need to speak/ write. One of the forms of communication is oral communication which is realized by using oral skills.

As mentioned above, oral communication skills are speaking and listening. In real life, listening is used twice as often as speaking. However, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing (Rivers, 1981). Inside ELT classrooms, speaking and listening are the most often used skills (Brown, 1994).

In oral communication process, the roles of speakers and listeners are interchanged, information gaps between them are created and then closed with the effort from both sides. In organizing classroom oral practice, teachers should create as much information gaps as possible and teachers’ vital duty is to encourage communication which yields information gaps. Teachers should also bear in mind the differences between real-life oral communication and classroom oral communication. As for Pattison (1987) classroom oral practices have five characteristics: (1) the content or topic is predictable and decided by teachers, books, tapes, etc; (2) Learners’ aims in speaking is: to practice speaking, to follow teachers’ instructions and to get good marks; (3) Learners’ extrinsic motivation is
satisfied; (4) participants are often a large group; (5) language from teachers or tapes is closely adapted to learners’ level.

Nunan (1989) provides a list of characteristics of successful oral communication. As for him, successful oral communication should involve:

1. Comprehensible pronunciation of the target language.
2. Good use of stress, rhythm, intonation patterns.
3. Fluency
4. Good transactional and interpersonal skills
5. Skills in taking short and long speaking in turns
6. Skills in the management of interactions
7. Skills in negotiating meaning
8. Conversational listening skills
9. Skills in knowing about and negotiating purposes for the conversation
10. Using appropriate conversational formulae and filters

1.4. Speaking skill

Many language learners consider speaking ability the measure of knowing a language. As for them, fluency is the ability to converse with others much more than the ability to read, write or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments on spoken communication. Therefore, if learners do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunities to speak in the language classroom, they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the contrary, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be.

1.4.1. Concepts of speaking (spoken language)

Speaking is fundamental to human communication. Different linguists have different concepts of speaking but they all agree with this idea.

Brown (1994) defines speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information.
In Brown and Yule’s opinions (1983), spoken language consists of short, fragmentary utterances in a range of pronunciation. Usually, there is a great deal of repetition and overlap between one speaker and another. Speaker usually uses non-specific references. They also add that spoken language is made to feel less conceptually dense than other types of language such as prose by using the loosely organized syntax, and non-specific words, phrases and filters such as oh, well, uhuh.

1.4.2. Characteristics of speaking

Speaking has the following characteristics:

Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations can be identified and charted.

Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary ("linguistic competence"), but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language ("sociolinguistic competence").

Speech has its own skills, structures, and conventions different from written language. A good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

Bygate (1987) considers speaking as an undervalued skill in many ways. The reason is that almost all people can speak, and so take speaking skill too much for granted. He also asserts that speaking skill deserves attention every bit as much as literacy skills. Learners often need to be able to speak with confidence in order to carry out many of their most basic transactions. Bygate also highly appreciates speaking skill by stating that speaking is the medium through which much language is learnt.

To sum up, it is undeniable that speaking is key to communication. By considering what good speakers do, what speaking tasks can be used in class, and what specific needs learners report, teachers can help learners improve their speaking and overall oral competency.
1.5. Prior studies related to teaching speaking

In 1996, together with her colleagues, Tsui A carried out a study to find out the challenges facing the teaching and learning of speaking skill. The result of their research shows that learners’ low motivation is the biggest problem. In the study, they also suggest some actions that teachers should take to improve their learners’ motivation. Some very effective solutions may be cited as follows: making instructional goals explicit to learners; breaking learning down into different achievable steps; linking learning to the needs and interests of learners; allowing learners to bring their own knowledge and perspectives into the learning process, etc.

Recently, in their minor study, Julie Mathews-Aydinli and Regina Van Horne (2006) have pointed out that multilevel classes can present challenges to teachers, as it is very difficult to design or organize speaking activities for many learners with different levels and interests. The suggested solutions are also presented in their study. As for them, there are some things that teachers should follow in order to promote success of multilevel classes not only in speaking lessons but also in other ones. The suggested solutions are:

1. assessing learners’ needs to find out what learners need and want to learn;
2. planning parallel lessons for learners at different levels, then divide learners into pairs or groups to carry out different activities;
3. grouping strategies and purpose (determine when whole-group activities, small-group activities, pair work, and individual work are appropriate);
4. using native language to clarify instructions so that all students remain engaged or allowing learners to use native language to negotiate meaning when possible;
5. using project-based learning (learners are presented with a problem to solve or a product to develop) and thematic instruction (work in groups based on their interests rather than their English proficiency levels);
6. using self-access material (teachers can keep a collection of self-access materials in their classrooms so that students can select materials and work individually)
CHAPTER 2: PRACTICAL RESEARCH

In the previous chapter, the theoretical matters related to the topic have been covered. However, in order to see how it really is in real teaching and learning, a practical research was carried out. The Practical Research underwent the following steps:

1- Designing survey questionnaires
2- Delivering question sheets.
3- Collecting finished question sheets.
4- Analyzing collected data
5- Drawing conclusions from the results of the questionnaires and giving suggestions

In this chapter, only the first four steps are mentioned. The last step will be presented in the next chapter – Findings and Recommendations.

2.1. Background of the study

2.1.1. Description of the English course and its objectives in the PPA

Foreign language is now a compulsory subject. In the PPA, students can choose to attend one of the four foreign language classes: English, French, Chinese and Russian. However, the number of students who learn English is always the largest. Students in the PPA have foreign language lessons during the first and the second year.

Like in other non-language major universities, the English course in the PPA is divided into two stages: one for general English; the other for English for specific purposes.

The first stage - the stage for general English - lasts 240 periods and it is carried out in two semesters. Aiming at providing students with general knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary, phonology as well as developing students’ four language skills with the focus on speaking skill, at this very first stage, the textbook *Lifelines* (Elementary and Pre-Intermediate) is used. By using this textbook, we can develop our students’ communicative competence and our students can learn the real things from daily life. Students are required to work in pairs, in groups to practise English in common situations. Additionally, students also have chances to listen to both native and non-native speakers from the tapes used with the textbook. At this stage, two forms of tests are used: an oral test at the end of first term and a written one at the end of second term.
The second stage – the stage for English for Specific purposes – lasts 120 periods. At this stage, our students are provided with the knowledge of terms and structures related to their profession. The textbook used at this stage (English for Police), which mainly focuses on developing students’ reading, speaking and a little on writing skill, is designed by teachers at the PPA ourselves. Students are required to read the texts on real law cases, try to find out the meanings of the law terms and then discuss in pairs, in groups answering the questions that followed. At the end of this stage students have oral tests.

The objectives of the English course are clear. At the end of the course (after 360 periods), students are required to obtain:

- General knowledge of English grammar and an active vocabulary of 1,500 words.
- The ability to communicate with foreigners in English in common situations like: showing ways, asking to check foreigners’ suspecting luggage.
- The ability to understand and use the professional terms and structures

2.1.2. Description of the students at the PPA

Like students of other colleges and universities, in order to be students of the PPA, they have to pass a very challenging University Entrance Examination. Students of the PPA come from all parts of the country: big cities, provinces and mountainous areas.

New students of the PPA do not have the same level of English language proficiency. Some of them have learned English for 7 years at secondary and high schools some have only learned English for 3 years and some other have never learned English. Students from big cities like Hanoi, Haiphong seem better. However, they are only good at grammar, not speaking. They can do grammatical exercises very quickly and well but they cannot speak fluently and most of them do not feel confident in communicating in English.

2.1.3. Description of the teachers at the PPA

If students are the most important factor in the learning process, teachers are the most important factor in the teaching process. In the PPA, there are 9 teachers of English language aged from 25 to 51 but none of them have ever been to any English speaking countries. Of the nine teachers, only 4 have been trained at College of Foreign Languages-Vietnam National University, Hanoi and one has been trained from Hanoi University of Foreign Studies. The rest used to be teachers of Russian but now there are not enough Russian classes for them. So, after having attended an English-training course which lasted more than two years, they became teachers of English.
2.1.4. Description of physical setting

The term “physical setting” refers to the place where the lessons take place, the number of students in an English class, the equipments and different types of materials available for teachers and students in teaching and learning English.

In the PPA, English teaching and learning activities are mostly carried out inside the classrooms which are designed for lecture lessons with the only classroom equipment- a chalkboard. The only type of teaching aid that the Foreign Languages Department (FLD) has is cassette recorder. There are about 7 cassette recorders in FLD but they are not in good conditions due to their oldness. The PPA also has other equipments like multi-functions projectors, video recorders, TV but they are not enough for all classes.

In terms of class size, as a non-language university, the number of students in an English class is quite large, from 40 to 50. Especially, there are even classes with 70 students. This large number causes a great deal of difficulties for the teaching and learning.

The materials for reference and self-study are not available for teachers and students at the PPA. In the library, there are only some English books but they are not really helpful for teachers and students. The problem is not very bad for teachers since they can go out find their own references but it is very difficult for students as they are required to stay inside the Academy campus during weekdays and even at weekends.

2.2. Design and methodology

2.2.1. The participants

In order to get information to fulfill the aims of the study, two survey questionnaires were designed. The first questionnaire was administered to 9 teachers who teach English to non-English language major students at the PPA. The researcher selected them as participants of the study with the hope to find out the teaching methods and techniques they currently apply in teaching English speaking skill to non-English major students at the PPA. These teachers, 3 males and 6 females, aged from 25 to 51 with the majority in their forties. They can be divided into two different generations. The first generation consists of 5 teachers aged from 44 to 51. Four of them are former teachers of Russian. The second generation comprises of the rest 4 teachers ranged from 25 to 29 years of age. Three of them were trained from full-time training courses on English language teaching at College of Foreign
Languages – Vietnam National University, Hanoi (CFL - VNU) and one graduated from Hanoi University of Foreign Studies.

The second questionnaire was administered to 150 non-English language major students at the PPA. They are male and female students who were randomly chosen from 220 non English - major students of pre-intermediate level of English language proficiency. Most of them aged from 18 to 22 and they are first year students. The researcher delivered the questionnaire to those students in order to investigate the problems facing the learning of English speaking skill of pre-intermediate level students at the PPA. Only first year students were chosen because they were learning English at the time of delivering questionnaire. Moreover, it is in first year syllabus that speaking skill is paid most attention to.

2.2.2. Research instruments

To have a good and deep understanding of the issue, referring to the source of collected data associated with the reviewed literature is of great importance.

As mentioned above, in order to gather information for the study, the survey method employing self-administered survey questionnaires for both students and teachers was used. The researcher only used survey questionnaire as instrument because of its convenience and the limitation of time and scope of this study.

2.2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis is not simply a single description of the collected data. In fact, it is the process by which the researcher interprets the data collected from the survey questionnaires. The scheme and coding categories in this research emerged from an examination of data rather than being pre-determined and imposed on the data.

2.3. Presentation of statistical results

2.3.1. Questionnaire for Teachers

2.3.1.1. Methodology

The questionnaire for teachers consists of 11 open-ended questions written in English with the hope to find out teachers’ perception of CLT, the difficulties they encounter in their
teaching of speaking skill and their techniques in dealing with these difficulties. The questions are divided into 5 different categories:
- Question 1: Teachers’ experiences
- Questions 2-4: Teachers’ opinions of CLT
- Question 5: Teachers’ difficulties in teaching speaking skill
- Questions 6-7: Teachers’ reaction to students’ mistakes
- Questions 8-11: Teachers’ techniques in dealing with the difficulties mentioned above.

Nine copies of the survey questionnaires were delivered to the teachers and they have been all responded.

2.3.1.2. Results

❖ Teachers’ experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of teaching English</th>
<th>N° of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Teachers’ years of teaching English*

The table shows that English language teachers at the PPA are quite experienced. Five out of nine teachers (55.5%) have been teaching foreign language for more than twenty years. However, four of them began with teaching Russian. That explains why there is only one teacher (11%) with more than 15 years of teaching English although 5 of them are over 45.

❖ Teachers’ opinion of CLT

CLT is now the dominant English language teaching method; however, not all teachers at the PPA have adequate training in CLT.

*Question 2: Have you ever been trained in CLT?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N° of Teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in English Language Teaching course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in ELT workshops, conferences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Teachers’ CLT training background*
It can be seen clearly from the table that only 4 (44.5%) English language teachers at the PPA have received formal training in CLT. All of these teachers graduated from CFL - VNU Hanoi. Among these 4 teachers, 3 are being retrained in CLT as they are attending Master course on ELT. Another 4 teachers (44.5%) were trained in CLT in ELT workshops and conferences. One teacher has never received any kinds of training in CLT. However, she still has general knowledge about CLT as she has read some books on CLT herself.

**Question 3: CLT …**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>always emphasizes fluency over accuracy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is learner – centered</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'s final goal is students' communicative competence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>does not teach grammar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is used only for teaching speaking skill, not for other skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focuses on meaningful tasks rather than on language itself</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Teachers’ perception of CLT**

Statistics from table 3 show that the teachers at the PPA have quite good knowledge of CLT and its features. 100% of the teachers asked think that CLT is learner-centered and they all agree that CLT’s final goal is students’ communicative competence. The percentage of those who agree that CLT emphasizes fluency over accuracy accounts for 44.5%. Although in many of the teachers’ opinion (78%), CLT focuses on meaningful tasks rather than on language itself, none of them thinks that CLT does not teach grammar. Only 4 believe that CLT is used only for teaching speaking, not for other skills.

**Question 4: Do you use CLT in teaching speaking?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Number of teachers who have applied CLT in teaching speaking skill**

Having noticed the benefits that CLT can bring to English Language Teaching, all the 9 teachers have applied CLT into their teaching. However they also assert that sometimes they find it very hard to apply CLT into their teaching. In other words, the teachers at the
PPA encounter many difficulties when teaching speaking skill in light of CLT. The next question of the survey is aimed at finding out these obstacles.

- **Difficulties in teaching speaking skill to students at the PPA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N° of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ low motivation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ low level of English proficiency</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large class and heterogeneous class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Difficulties in teaching speaking skill*

Looking at table 5, we can see that all the options listed in the questionnaires turned out to be the very difficulties that teachers at the PPA confront with in their teaching. In my opinion, these are not only the difficulties of teachers at the PPA but also the difficulties of English language teachers at almost all non-language major universities and colleges.

- **Teachers’ reaction to students’ mistakes**

*Questions 6: What is your reaction when your students keep making mistakes?*

*Question 7: How often do you correct students’ mistakes while they’re performing?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N° of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Remain silent, smile and encourage them to go on</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Remain silent but do not smile or encourage them</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stop them and correct the mistake</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Get angry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: Teachers’ reaction when students keep making mistakes and frequency of correcting mistakes while students are performing their tasks*

The table shows that not many teachers at the PPA are tolerant if their students keep making the same mistakes: 45% of them get angry, 22% stop students and correct their mistakes. Only 11 can still be patient and encourage students to go on. Consequently, the
frequency of interrupting students to correct mistakes while they are performing their tasks is quite high. All the teachers, more or less, stop students to correct mistakes and 66.7% percent of the teachers frequently do so. It can be inferred that the teachers still pay so much attention to accuracy, not fluency and this violates one of the principles of CLT. If teachers keep doing so, they cannot develop their students’ communicative ability.

- Techniques in minimizing the difficulties encountered in teaching speaking

**Questions 8-10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Nº of Ts</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ low motivation</strong></td>
<td>Suggest interesting topics for discussion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use authentic materials (songs, games, films, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carry out on-going assessments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Let them choose topics to discuss</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ low level of spoken language</strong></td>
<td>Select and organize simple communicative activities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give students chances and allotted time to prepare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give instructions in Vietnamese</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criticize them for their level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neglect them</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Large and heterogeneous classes</strong></td>
<td>Use pair work and group work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize activities for the general level and move around to help less able students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize different tasks for different levels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask students to work at different aspects of the same task</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7: Techniques employed in minimizing the difficulties**

**Question 11: Preventing students from using Vietnamese in group and pair work.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Nº of teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move around to observe</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind them to speak English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticize them</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8: Techniques to prevent students from using Vietnamese in group and pair work**

Teachers at the PPA have used many techniques to minimize the difficulties they encounter. Dealing with students’ low motivation, 44.5% of the teachers suggest
interesting topics for discussion. However, quite a large number of teachers (33%) do not do anything to motivate their learners.

To overcome another difficulty – students’ low level of spoken language – and in order to save time, many teachers (44.5%) give instructions in Vietnamese. Another quite widely used technique is selecting and organizing simple communicative activities (44.5%).

For large and heterogeneous classes, 100% of the teachers regard pair work and group work good solutions. Organizing activities for the general level and moving around to help less able students is the technique used by quite a large number of teachers (66.7%). The effectiveness of pair work and group work is clear. Nevertheless, students tend to use Vietnamese during group work and pair work. To prevent this from happening, all teachers move around to observe. 44.5% of them often remind students to speak English.

2.3.2. Questionnaire for Students

2.3.2.1. Methodology

150 copies of the second questionnaire which consists of 15 questions were delivered to 150 students. These fifteen questions can be divided into 9 categories:

- Question 1: Students’ English learning history
- Question 2: Reasons for learning English
- Questions 3-4: Opinions on language skills
- Question 5: Opinions on the speaking topics presented in Lifeline Pre-intermediate
- Questions 6-7: Participation in speaking lessons
- Question 8: Difficulties encounter during speaking process
- Questions 9-10: Teachers’ reactions to students’ mistakes
- Questions 11-12-13: Teachers’ teaching methods and techniques to encourage students
- Questions 14-15: Students’ attitude

2.3.2.2. Results

 Students’ English learning history

94% of students taking part in the research have learnt English at secondary or/and high schools. Only 6% of them do not know any English. Of the 94% of students who have learnt English, 13% have learnt English for 7 years.
Reasons for learning English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N° of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To listen to English songs</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read books, magazines, newspapers…in English</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To know about the language and culture of other countries</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help with job in the future</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To speak to foreigners</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To follow university curriculum</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Reasons for learning English

The statistics in table 1 show that the majority of students (72.7%) learn English because they think it will be helpful for their future job. Quite a large number of students learn English simply because it is a compulsory subject in the syllabus. They have no other choice but learning it. It can be seen from the statistics that not many students really love English and learn it as a hobby.

Opinions on language skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N° of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The most difficult language skill</strong></td>
<td>Listening skill</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking skill</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading skill</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing skill</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The importance of speaking skill</strong></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quite important</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rather important</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Students’ opinions on language skills

Listening skill is the most difficult skill for students at the PPA. 88% of the students understand very little, sometimes even nothing when listening to the tapes. Only 6% of students think that speaking is the most difficult skill.

When asked about the importance of speaking skill, half of the students find it very important to them, 40% consider speaking skill quite important. A very small number of students (3.3%) think that speaking skill is not at all important.
Opinions on the speaking topics presented in Lifeline Pre-intermediate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interesting</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All right</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too boring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Opinions on the speaking topics presented in Lifelines Pre-Intermediate

Students have different ideas on the topics introduced in their textbook. More than half of them (58%) find those topics neither interesting nor boring while 36% of the students think that those topics are interesting enough to attract them. The numbers of students who find those topics boring and too boring are 4% and 2% respectively.

Participation in speaking lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you ready to speak?</td>
<td>Yes, I like speaking very much</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, sometimes</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, I’m never willing to speak</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for unwillingness</td>
<td>I’m afraid of losing face</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m not accustomed to speaking in class</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My learning goal is not to communicate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teaching way is boring</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Students’ unwillingness in speaking and reasons

Looking at table 4, we can see that not many students are ready to speak in English lessons. 70% of the participants sometimes speak whereas 15% state that they are never willing to speak. The number of those who are willing to speak as they like speaking very much only accounts for 20%.

There are different reasons for students’ unwillingness. Being affected by their prior learning experiences at school, many participants (62%) answered they are not accustomed to speaking in class. During the lessons, they just sit down and take notes. 24% of the
Participants confess that they are afraid of being laughed at by the teachers and their friends if they do not speak well or correctly. The percentage of students who complain about the teachers’ teaching way is quite high (26%). So, it is really necessary for teachers to find appropriate teaching methods in order to encourage students to speak.

- **Difficulties encounter during speaking process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find ideas</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find words</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find structures</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough time to prepare</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13: Difficulties encounter during speaking process**

Together with the reasons mentioned in table 4, table 5 gives us the factors that deter students to speak. They are the difficulties that students encounter during their process of speaking. For students at the PPA, the biggest factor that prevents them from expressing their ideas is their poor vocabulary (76%). Finding structures is another difficulty. 70.7% of the respondents cannot speak because they cannot find structures needed. 23.3% of the students are unable to find ideas meanwhile 18% of them complain that they are not given enough time to prepare. It is clear that students’ low level of proficiency is a big obstacle for the teaching and learning process.

- **Teachers’ reactions to students’ mistakes**
  - **Teachers’ talking time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little much</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 14: Teachers’ talking time**

It is clear that more than half of the participants (60%) think that their teachers’ talking time is enough while only 7.3% of them consider the teachers’ talking time too much. The percentage of those who believe that their teachers talk too little is 10.7%.
- Teachers’ reactions to students’ mistakes while performing tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get angry and interrupt you to correct</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remain self-control but interrupt you to correct</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait until you finish your task, point out your mistakes then correct them for you</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait until you finish your task, point out your mistakes then encourage you and your classmates to correct</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 15: Teachers’ reactions to students’ mistakes**

According to the collected data, only 2% of students say that their teachers often get angry and interrupt them to correct mistakes while they are performing tasks. It can be inferred that the teachers at the PPA still focus more on accuracy than fluency as 70.7% of students state that their teachers remain self-control but immediately stop them to correct.

- Teachers’ teaching methods and techniques to encourage students to speak more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of Ss</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your teachers’ actions after giving you topics</td>
<td>Help you with the main ideas for the topics</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help you with words, structures related to the topics</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage you to brainstorm to find out ideas and language needed</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immediately ask you to discuss the topics</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have enough time allotted for preparation?</td>
<td>Yes, usually</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, sometimes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, very little</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, far from enough</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your teachers’ techniques to encourage you</td>
<td>Suggest interesting topics for discussion</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use communicative games, songs, films, etc.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give you some suggested questions</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use group work and pair work</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 16: Teachers’ teaching methods and techniques to encourage students**

The statistics in the table show that 70% of the students say that after giving topics, their teachers often give them words and structures needed and 52% state that their teachers often help them with the ideas. Those who answer that their teachers often encourage them
to brainstorm to find out ideas and language needed account for 46% while 16.7% complain that their teachers do nothing but immediately ask them to discuss.

Concerning allotted time for preparation, 94 out of 150 respondents (62.7%) believe that their teachers usually give them enough, 31.3% say that they are sometimes given enough. Only 6% of the respondents state that they usually have very little time for preparation.

It is interesting that the teachers at the PPA have used many different techniques to encourage students to speak more. Using pair work and group work seems to be the most frequently used one. 82% of students notice that in order to encourage them to speak more, their teachers often use pair work or group work, half of them say that their teachers give them suggested questions. 42% of the participants state that their teachers often encourage them by suggesting interesting topics for discussion whereas the number of those who say that their teachers use communicative games, songs, films, etc. is 30.7%.

- Students’ attitudes towards teaching methods and techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Nº of Ss</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To motivate you, your teachers should…</strong></td>
<td><strong>Be tolerant of your mistakes</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Accept a variety of your answers.</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Give you reading-text based topics</strong></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Let you choose the topic yourselves</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you like pair/group work?</strong></td>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the benefits of pair work and group work?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provide you with chances to express your own ideas</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Enable you to speak more</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Give you chances to learn from your friends</strong></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Make you speak English more naturally and creatively</strong></td>
<td>83</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Provide you with opportunities to chat with your friends in Vietnamese</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 17: Students’ attitudes towards methods and techniques**

The data in table 9 show that the majority of the respondents (65.3%) think that in order to motivate them to speak more, their teachers should give them reading-text-based topics.
They explain that if the teachers do so, it will be easier for them to speak as they can get ideas, words, structures, etc. from the text. Nearly half of the students (47.3%) hope that their teachers are tolerant with their mistakes and 42% of them would like their teachers to accept different answers from them. Only 36% wish to be allowed to choose the topics themselves.

Pair work and group work are highly appreciated by many students. 126 students (84) say that they like to discuss in pairs and in groups. These students also give the benefits that pair work and group work can bring. 83 out of these 126 students state that pair work and group work make them speak English more naturally and creatively. 81 of them think that pair work and group work provide chances to learn from their friends while 75 students believe that pair work and group work enable them to speak more. Disappointingly, 16 out of 126 students suppose working in pairs or groups gives them opportunities to chat with their friends in Vietnamese.
This chapter presents the major problems that teachers and students at the PPA encounter during the process of teaching and learning English speaking skill. These difficulties have been drawn from the results of the two survey questionnaires. The author’s suggested techniques and activities which help improve the quality of the teaching of speaking skill are also presented in this chapter.

3.1. Findings

The results of the two questionnaires clearly show the factors that make the teaching and learning of speaking skill at the PPA less effective. They can be classified into three main groups namely: difficulties from teachers; difficulties from students and objective factors.

3.1.1. Difficulties from teachers

3.1.1.1. Misconceptions about CLT

Although all the nine teachers of the English Division have applied CLT into their teaching, they still have some misconceptions about it. Firstly, nearly half of the teachers believe that CLT is only used for teaching speaking skill. That results in the fact that in many lessons, teachers just divide students into pairs or groups and tell them to talk to their partners without much explanation. It means that teachers’ talking time was minimized meanwhile students’ talking time was maximized. Secondly, some teachers think that they should provide students with all the language they need to complete a task. In fact, in applying CLT, teachers cannot know exactly what language the students will use. If the teachers keep doing so, students will become lazy and less creative in learning.

The last misconception is that many teachers still believe that accuracy is more important than fluency. This misconception leads to inappropriate ways of correcting mistakes. If students make mistakes while performing their tasks, teachers often stop them immediately to correct. This is really a threat to students’ fluency and continuous thinking. Furthermore, this may embarrass students and make them feel that they lose their face which later results in their unwillingness and de-motivation in speaking in public.
3.1.1.2. Deep-routed habits of prior teaching methods

Despite the fact that the teachers at the PPA are well aware of the benefits of CLT, many of them admit that they find it hard to apply CLT into their teaching. According to them there are many reasons for this, however, the biggest obstacle is that they have been deeply affected by prior dominated teaching methods. They also add that after quite a long time applying these methods, they become absorbed to them and it is really hard for them to “escape”. They bear in mind that they should apply CLT but when they cannot find the appropriate ways to carry out activities, they just return to the old ones.

3.1.2. Difficulties from students

3.1.2.1. Low level of English language proficiency

The results of the questionnaires reveal the fact that students’ low level of English language proficiency is one of the major factors which prevent them from speaking willingly in lessons. Ninety-four percent of the students have already learnt English at secondary and/or high school, however, their knowledge of the English language (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) is not good enough for them to express ideas in English. As time gone by, if their knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary is not improved, they will lose interest in speaking.

3.1.2.2. Low motivation

The importance of motivation to language learning is clear to all. Motivation is related to success in second language learning. Motivation is expressed through students’ diligence and ardent participation in the lessons. Nevertheless, not many students at the PPA are willing to speak in speaking lessons. The major reason for that is: as non-English language major students, they do not pay much attention to English. In their mind, English is just a “secondary” subject. They “have to” learn English as it is a compulsory subject in the syllabus and not many of them really love English and learn it as a hobby.

3.1.2.3. Passive learning style

Another factor that deters students from participating actively in speaking lesson results from their passive learning style. Being deeply affected by some methods like Grammar-Translation or Audio-lingual Method and the learning environment at secondary or high schools where speaking was not encouraged and focused, students believe that the best
way of learning English is just sitting, listening to the teachers and writing down what the teachers say. In their opinion, good at English means good at grammar, vocabulary, not at speaking or listening.

3.1.2.4. Lack of confidence
Many students confess that being afraid of losing face is one reason why they do not speak willingly in speaking lessons. Resulting from their low level of proficiency and their lack of ideas, they do not feel confident enough to speak in front of their teachers and their friends. They are afraid that if they make mistakes, they will be laughed at and their status will be lowered. Students should be aware that confidence is especially important in learning speaking. If they are afraid of making mistakes, afraid of losing face, they cannot make use of the chances to express their ideas and show their language use. Their teachers and friends will not laugh at them but help them correct their mistakes which later results in their progress.

3.1.3. Objective factors
3.1.3.1. Large and heterogeneous classes
As I have already mentioned, English classes in the PPA often consist of 40 – 50 students. Especially, there are classes with 75 students. Moreover, the students at the PPA are of different levels. Some of them have learnt English for 7 years at secondary and high schools; some have only learnt for 3 years; some have never learnt English.
Although large and heterogeneous classes have their own advantages like they provide richer pool of human resources or they bring about educational value in the actual contact between different kinds of people, they are big challenges for teachers. In these classes, it is really very hard for teacher to organize activities, to control the class and to put an eye on every student. Learning in such classes, only good and talkative students make use of the chances to raise their voice. At the same time, shy and less able students cannot be given enough care, attention and encouragement. What’s more, not having enough opportunities to speak English in class also makes students lose their interest in speaking lessons in particular and in learning English in general.

3.1.3.2. Lack of class time and teaching aids
The current time allotted for the textbook Lifelines-Pre-intermediate at the PPA is 100 periods (45 minutes per period). There are 14 units in this textbook covering all the four
skills. It means that each unit is covered in about 7 periods. Seven periods are clearly not enough for teachers to cover all the four skills with quite large amount of knowledge. That’s the reason why it is quite hard for teachers to give students extra speaking activities. Besides the lack of time, the lack of teaching aids like video recorders, multi-functions projectors also lowers the effectiveness of teaching process. Let’s take the use of authentic materials as an example. Teachers at the PPA have realized the importance of authentic materials in English language learning and teaching in light of CLT. Unfortunately, when teachers would like to let their students assess to this kind of material to see how conversations are carried out in real life by showing them some video clips or TV programmes it is almost impossible because there are not enough video recorders.

3.2. Recommendations for teachers

Within the scope of this study, the author does not have the ambition to find the solutions to all the problems mentioned above. In this part, she just wants to suggest some techniques and activities that she thinks could solve some problems from students’ sides. The author also believes that these techniques and activities could improve the quality of the teaching, and consequently the quality of the learning, of English speaking skill.

3.2.1. Some suggested techniques in teaching speaking

3.2.1.1. Teaching speaking strategies

Many people believe that effective teachers teach students speaking strategies which they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. This is especially important for students at the PPA the majority of whom do not have good knowledge of English. According to Burkart (1998), speaking strategies include: using minimal response, recognizing scripts and using language to talk about language.

❖ Using minimal responses

Minimal responses are idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, etc. They are very useful for unconfident students who often listen in silence while others do the talking. They can build a stock of minimal responses that they can use in different situations. Possessing a stock of minimal responses
enables students to focus on what the other participants are saying as they do not have to plan responses.

- Recognizing scripts

In real-life communication, many situations are related to a script - a predictable set of language. Language used in greetings, apologies, invitations, etc. which are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow certain scripts. Therefore, making students well aware of the scripts for different situations is a good way for teachers to help students improve their speaking ability.

- Using language to talk about language

Misunderstanding and the need for clarification can occur in any types of interaction. However, students often say nothing when they do not understand another participant or when the other speaker does not understand them. Teachers can help students overcome this problem by giving them strategies and phrases used for clarification.

3.2.1.2. Use language in authentic ways

In learning speaking, it is best if students have frequent chances to hear and read the language as native speakers use it. Teachers can give students these chances through teachers’ talk and materials.

As for teachers, they should always try to use the language as naturally as possible. It is advisable that teachers should: speak at normal rate; use vocabulary and structures that students are familiar with; state the same idea in different ways to aid comprehension.

Authentic materials can be found in magazines, newspapers, TV and radio broadcasts etc. Besides providing students with the chances to see how communication is carried out in real life, authentic materials also help introduce cultural aspects of language use to students.

3.2.1.3. Design activities with a purpose

Normally, every real-life communication has a purpose - to convey information. Activities in the language classroom simulate communication outside the classroom when they are structured with such a purpose. In other words, the clearer the purpose of the discussion is, the more motivated students will be. In such classroom activities, students use the language to fill an information gap by getting answers or expanding a partial understanding.
3.2.1.4. Use task-based activities

In real life, people use language to perform tasks such as solving problems, developing plans or teaching. The use of similar task-based activities inside the classrooms will encourage students to use the language.

3.2.1.5. Base the activities on easy language

Generally, the level of language needed for a discussion should be lower than that use in intensive-learning activities in the same class. The language required for a discussion should be easily recalled and produced by students so that they can speak fluently. In some cases, pre-teaching or reviewing essential vocabulary before the activity starts is a good idea.

3.2.1.6. Use pair work and group work

Working in pairs and in groups is a good way for students to use the language in a variety of ways and learn from each other. This also increases the sheer amount of learners’ talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the class.

Effective pair and group activities have the following characteristics: (1) communication gap: each student has relevant information that the others don’t; (2) task orientation: activity has a defined outcome such as solving a problem; (3) time limit: students have a preset amount of time to complete the task. In case the task is based on group discussion, the teachers should include instructions about participation when introducing it.

Another issue that may reduce the effectiveness of pair work and group work is students’ Vietnamese use. They may use Vietnamese during discussion or even chat with each other. The best way to keep students speaking English is that the teachers should try their best to put an eye on all groups, remind students and model them the language use.

3.2.1.7. Adjust Feedback/ Error correction

Teachers should use different ways of giving feedback or correcting errors for different lessons. For lessons that focus on form like grammar lessons, direct and immediate feedback and error correction are needed and expected. However, in communicative lessons like speaking, the flow of talk should not be interrupted by the teachers’ corrections. Teachers should only give feedback and correct errors after students already finish their task. When giving feedback, teachers should give feedback on both form and
content. It is advisable that teachers should encourage students to self-correct. Giving feedback and correcting errors is also a good way to motivate students as it is a useful comprehension for students and it shows that the teachers really listen to what they say.

3.2.2. Some suggested activities

3.2.2.1. Drill activities

This is quite a simple kind of activities as students only repeat or imitate. These activities may be: repetition practice of set of sentence prompted by pictures or word cues, asking and answering questions with only one predictable, correct answer. In traditional classrooms, these activities were used frequently. In many modern classrooms, this kind of activities no longer exists. In my opinion, these activities are still very helpful for students with low level of proficiency like those at the PPA. They help students improve the accurate use of words, structures, pronunciations, build up a stock of minimal responses and foster confidence.

3.2.2.2. Structured output activities / Guided activities

Structured output activities consist of tasks that students carry out using language items recently introduced, sometimes in combination with previously learned items. In these activities students can change to talk about themselves and to communicate their own needs and ideas. These activities have one feature in common with real communication – that is obtaining missing information by completing a task. However, this kind of activities helps practise specific language items. In this respect, it is more like drill than communication. Two common kinds of structured output activities are information gap activities and jigsaw activities.

- Information gap activities:

  These activities are often carried out in form of pair work and group work.

  - Completing the picture

Example 1: Two students have the similar pictures with different missing details. They have to cooperate to find all the missing details without looking at partner’s picture.

Example 2: Two students have similar pictures but similar items are different in appearance. Students have to cooperate to figure out the differences without looking at partner’s picture.
This kind of activities helps practise numerous language items. The practised grammar and vocabulary are determined by the content of the pictures and the missing or different items.

- **Filling the gaps in a timetable or diary**

**Example 3:** Student A holds a school timetable with some subjects missing. Student B has the same timetable with different blank spaces. Without looking at the other’s picture, they must fill in the blanks by asking appropriate questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ThangLong High School Timetable – Grade 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 15 (14/04-19/04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afternoon</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example, students can practise questions like: ‘What do we have on Tuesday morning?’ or “Do we have anything on Thursday afternoon?”

A: What do we have on Monday afternoon?
B: Literature. And do we have anything on Wednesday afternoon?
A: Oh, yes. We have biology

- **Jigsaw activities**

Jigsaw activities are more complicated information gap activities that can be done with several partners. In such activities, each partner has one piece or more of a puzzle and they must work together to fit all the pieces together. There are several forms of puzzle piece: a panel from a comic strip, a photo from a set that tells a story, a sentence from a written narrative, etc.
Example 4: Students work in group of 6; each has a picture card of a funny story named “An embarrassing incident”. They must work together to put the pictures in the correct order of the story.

(Adapted from Lifeline Pre-intermediate by Tom Hutchinson - OUP)

Answer: 5 – 6 – 2 – 4 – 3 – 1

One thing that teachers need to bear in mind when organizing information gap and jigsaw activities is their consciousness of the language demands they place on their students. If the activities require the language that students have not practised, teachers should help them preview the language they need.

2.2.2.3. Communicative output activities

Communicative output activities are activities resembling real settings which allow students to practise using all the language they know. The most common types of communicative activities are role-plays and discussions.

- Role-plays

In role-plays, students are put into situations imitating life. Therefore, the range of language functions expands considerably. These activities also help students practise and develop their sociolinguistic competence as they have to use the appropriate language to the situations and characters.
There are some tips teachers should bear in mind when using role-plays

- Prepare carefully: Describe clearly the situation to students and making sure that all of them understand it.
- Set a goal: Describe clearly to students the product of the role-play.
- Use role cards: Give each student a card described the role to be played. For students with low level of proficiency, the card may include words, structures that the character may use.
- Brainstorm: Ask students to brainstorm to predict the language they might use.
- Use small group: This ensures that less-confident students have chance to speak.
- Students’ preparation: Be sure to give students time to work individually to outline their ideas and language.
- Be present as a resource: Always ready to answer students’ questions without correcting their grammar or pronunciation unless they ask the teachers to do so.
- Allow students to work at their own levels: The levels of students are not the same, so don’t expect them to contribute equally to the role-play.
- Do topical follow-up: Ask students to report to the class on the outcome of their role-plays.
- Do linguistic follow-up: Give feedback and error correction.

Discussions

Discussions give students practice in negotiating meanings and chances to express themselves in the target language. Like role-plays, before using discussions, teachers should prepare carefully, otherwise they will have counter-effects. The tips which help apply discussions successfully are almost the same as those of role-plays. In addition, teachers may let students suggest the topic or choose from several given topics to discuss. Students will be more motivated and more interested in discussions if they like the topics.

In general, communicative output activities give students the opportunities to experiment, to see how far they can communicate in situations where they themselves are the people who choose the language and to practise using the language they know fluently. These activities also create a supportive atmosphere that allows students to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. These activities also motivate students and make they feel more confident to speak.
**Part C**

**CONCLUSION**

1. **Summary of the study**

No one can negate the importance of English to our daily life in the process of integration into the world. That is the reason why Vietnam intends to make English its second language. With this intention, English has been widely taught in Vietnam. However, there are many problems facing the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam. With the hope to find ways to improve the teaching and learning of speaking skill to non-English major students at the PPA, the researcher carried out this study. She has tried her best to reach what she aimed her study at.

The very first chapter – Literature Review – briefly covered the theories related to the study: CLT, Language skills, oral communication and speaking skill.

The second chapter is Practical Research. In this chapter, the author presented the results of the two survey questionnaires designed to find out the problems that teachers and students at the PPA encountered in teaching and learning speaking skill.

The last chapter – Findings and Recommendations – consists of author’s findings of the difficulties of the teaching and learning speaking skill at the PPA. The difficulties can be grouped into: difficulties from teachers’ side, difficulties from students’ side and objective factors. Another very important part of this chapter is the suggested techniques and activities which help overcome the major difficulties as well as improve the quality of teaching and learning speaking skill at the PPA.

2. **Limitations of the study**

Although the researcher has made efforts toward carrying out this study, due to the limitation of time, lack of resources and the researcher’s ability, drawbacks are unavoidable. As not all the students at the PPA involved in the survey questionnaire, to some extent, the results may not be generalized for all students. Also, the researcher only used survey questionnaires as the main instrument for data collection. In order to make the
obtained results more reliable, the researcher should apply different instruments for data collection. Despite of the unavoidable limitation, the researcher believes that this study is beneficial to the teaching of speaking skill to students of pre-intermediate level at the PPA and this will result in students’ progress.

3. Suggestions for further studies

This study only focuses on the teaching of English speaking skill to non-major students of pre-intermediate level at the PPA. The study has only mentioned a very small part of the issues related to the teaching and learning of speaking skill. There are some suggestions for further researches concerning the teaching and learning of speaking skill at the PPA:

- A research on the ways of introducing students to current ways of learning speaking.
- An action research on the effectiveness of the suggested techniques and activities mentioned in this research.
- A research on techniques and activities for students which help them improve their speaking skill.