

Teachers' Perceptions of Active Learning Techniques in Teaching Speaking: A Case at Language Centers in the Mekong Delta

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Abstract

This paper reports a descriptive study that explored teachers' perceptions of implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking and the challenges teachers encountered in their teaching practices in their speaking classes. Participants were 56 teachers from different language centers in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the teachers had positive perceptions of the implementation of active learning techniques in teaching speaking. They also expressed the advantages they gained as well as the difficulties they faced when implementing active learning techniques in their speaking classes.

Keywords: perceptions, active learning, speaking skills

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1. Introduction

The ability to make conversations using the target language is one of the most important aspects of language learning (Skyhan, 2008). Similarly, Richards and Renandya (2002) contend that the majority of language learners study English to develop proficiency in speaking English. It is evident that improving English speaking has considered as an essential goal for developing most of the aspects in each country in Asia including Vietnam.

Although the Vietnamese government concerned changes to meet the learners' needs for teaching and learning English, particularly speaking skills, there are still some existing problems in English language teaching.

The research report in this paper therefore fills the gap of how teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of active learning techniques in teaching speaking and explore factors that may influence their decisions to adopt or reject these techniques and aims to answer the following questions:

1. *What are teachers' perceptions about implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking?*
2. *What benefits and difficulties teachers have in implementing active learning techniques in speaking classes?*

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework of teaching speaking skills

In the field of teaching English speaking skill, EFL instructors have been concerned about a repetition of drills or memorize the English structures for many years. However, the goals of teaching speaking skills have been changed to improve learners' communicative skills. It is believed that when learning a foreign language, the ability to interact in the target language shows the ability to speak comprehensively and fluently (Omari, 2015). In relation to the study, it is necessary to define speaking skill, characteristics in which it is presented and factors affecting teaching and learning speaking.

2.1.1. Definitions of speaking

Levelt (1989) indicates that speaking is a cognitive process in which speakers draw on working memories of words and concepts to have sufficient content and background knowledge to speak. In addition, Nunan (1991), Ur (1996), Kao and O'Neill (1998) believe that speaking involves interaction as learners are allowed to express their ideas and share experiences about a particular topic. Similarly, Burns and Joyce (1997) and Brown (2001) describe speaking as an interactive process of constructing meaning and processing information.

2.1.2. Importance of speaking skills in language teaching

Researchers have highlighted that speaking skills are integral to achieving communicative competence, which involves the ability to use language effectively in real-life communication situations. According to Canale and Swain's (1980) influential model of communicative competence, speaking skills encompass not only grammatical accuracy but also fluency, appropriateness, and sociolinguistic competence. Speaking skills enable learners to express themselves, convey meaning, negotiate meaning with interlocutors, and participate in various

social and professional contexts.

Studies have shown that speaking skills are closely linked to overall language proficiency. In their research on English language learners, McKay and Bokhorst-Heng (2008) found that speaking proficiency was highly correlated with other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing. Developing speaking skills can facilitate the development of other language skills, as it requires learners to actively use and apply their linguistic knowledge in meaningful communication.

Motivation is a significant factor in language learning, and speaking skills can play a crucial role in fostering learners' motivation. When learners are able to use their speaking skills to communicate effectively and meaningfully in the target language, it can boost their motivation, engagement, and self-confidence. Research by Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) has shown that speaking activities that are enjoyable, relevant, and engaging can enhance learners' motivation and language learning outcomes.

2.1.3. Characteristics of speaking skills

Brown and Yule (1983) state that speaking involves several characteristics, including fluency, accuracy, appropriacy, and interactional competence. Nunan (1991) argues that speaking skills involve the ability to produce language spontaneously and accurately, to use strategies for communication, to negotiate meaning, and to take part in conversation. Additionally, Richards and Schmidt (2010) highlight that speaking skills involve not only the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences, but also the ability to use appropriate intonation, stress, and rhythm. Overall, these authors agree that speaking skills involve more than just linguistic competence, and also require pragmatic and strategic competence, as well as the ability to interact effectively with others in a given context.

2.1.3.1. Fluency

There are several definitions of the term fluency in speaking in the literature. Hughes (2002) defines fluency as the ability to express ideas and experiences in an intelligible, reasonable and accurate way, otherwise listeners can lose their interests because of too much hesitation in the communication. To achieve this goal, teachers are expected to create more opportunities for learners to speak and express their ideas.

Ellis (2003) provides the idea of fluency that it is the ability to produce a target language without pausing, hesitation and reformulation. The goal of fluency-focused activities is according to Davies and Pearse (2000) to practise utterances of newly acquired language in natural communication. During these activities, learners are not expected to avoid mistakes at any cost, they are encouraged to be able to express their opinions, think about what they are doing in activities, react spontaneously to real-life situations and to convey the message as quickly as possible.

Therefore, to achieve fluency, teachers should encourage learners to join in speaking activities and use their language freely to express their ideas.

2.1.3.2. Accuracy

According to Skehan (1996), accuracy refers to the ability to produce the target language based on the rule system of the target language. Therefore, learners should use correctly forms and utterances related to phonological, syntactic, semantic, discourse features and grammatical structure in speaking.

Accuracy refers to the correctness of speech. Therefore, learners should know grammatical structures and pay attention on teachers' and other learners' correctness of their language errors.

2.1.4 Factors causing speaking difficulties to EFL learners

Several factors include both internal and external factors hindering EFL learners' speaking performance have been discussed in the literature. Concerning internal factors from language learners themselves, Littlewood (1984) concerns this with lack of motivation in speaking English. Sharing this view, Ur (1996) indicates other possible challenges to learners' speaking skills namely learners' low participation in speaking activities and learners' fear of other good learners' speaking performance. Folley (2005) and Rabab'ah (2005) discover from their studies that traditional teaching methods can be challenging to learners in terms of teachers' limitation of how to teach speaking skills. Additionally, Al-Abri (2008) considers the lack of speaking active activities in classrooms can be one of the factors challenging learners' speaking performance.

2.1.5 Common Vietnamese teachers' practices in teaching speaking

English plays a vital role in Vietnam's political, economic, cultural and social domains. The learning approach in Confucian philosophy mainly focuses on the oral memorization and retention of information (Nguyen, 2014). Teachers provide lectures to learners who memorize and present the knowledge in the exams.

Recently, teaching and learning speaking skills have changed. The focus for Vietnam's education in teaching and learning English as a foreign language has changed to instructional approaches (J. D. London, 2011; Sloper & Le, 1995). It is considered that the goal of teaching and learning English focuses on communicative competence and learners' speaking skills.

2.2 Conceptual framework of active learning techniques

2.2.1 Definitions of active learning

Active learning has been defined in various ways by different authors, but the most common definition describes it as an approach that involves engaging students in the learning process through activities that require their participation and interaction, rather than just passively receiving information.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process through activities such as group discussions, problem-solving, and peer teaching. Freeman and colleagues (2014) define active learning as any instructional method that involves students in activities that promote their engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. To support these views, Prince (2004) define active learning as any instructional method that involves students in activities that promote their engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, as well as encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. Overall, active learning is characterized by student-centered instruction, engagement, interaction, and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

2.2.2 Features of active learning

The research discussed four main stages of active learning including student involvement, shared knowledge, cognitive process and student roles.

Firstly, active learning generally refers to student involvement and interaction in the learning process (Armstrong, 1983). This involvement can be an indicator that learners are willing to learn actively and participate in the instructional activities in speaking classes.

Secondly, active learning involves cognitive process and critical thinking skills. It occurs when students of different educational backgrounds and contexts share their own knowledge and experiences with peers to gain new language (Nguyen, 2014). Besides, on a higher level of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy about cognitive process, learners are expected to have the ability to understand the usefulness of new knowledge and how to use that knowledge in a meaningful and relevant way.

Thirdly, active learning is related to the notion that students are engaged in actually doing activities and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). This view is defined as the use of high level of cognitive process such as analysis, synthesis, and assessment, and develop their problem-solving skills (Eileen, 1995; Bonwell & Eison, 2001; Seeler, 2000).

Fourthly, active learning involves activities such as problem-solving and information gap tasks in small groups, simulations, case studies, and role plays (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. xi). In this way, teachers encourage a learner not only simply to participate in the learning process but also to use intellectual skills to think, to interpret information learned, and to take decisions related to the learning process.

2.2.3 Active learning techniques

The study will focus on three common active learning techniques that most teachers implement in their speaking classes including think-pair-share, group work and questioning.

2.2.3.1 Think-pair-share

Think-pair-share technique is one of the effective active learning techniques which involves students to share and solve their problems with a partner before presenting in a large class (Van de Bogart, 2009). Lyman (1988) defines the Think-Pair-Share technique as a multi-mode discussion cycle that is divided into three stages: (1) "Think": Students are given time to think individually after a question is posed; (2) "Pair": Discuss the ideas with each other within a paired setting to produce a final answer; and finally (3) "Share": Each pair share their new improved answer with the rest of the class. It has been found that think-pair-share technique has been seen as an active learning strategy where learners get an opportunity to develop problem solving skills, to enhance critical thinking, to improve communication skills besides providing as a powerful tool for unleashing discussion among peers as well as teachers.

2.2.3.2 Group work

Group work is another active learning strategy, which refers to any activity that students engage in as a small group including, discussion, projects, scenarios, and games. Group work allows learners to apply key concepts of the class or training. Learners can also apply their knowledge and reminds students about their responsibilities in working in groups (Alemu, 2010). It encourages students to become involved and be independent in their own learning process.

2.2.3.3 Questioning

Questioning is a technique which helps students to become more active and independent. Questions are asked during the lesson to engage students' attention on the course materials (Black et al., 2003). According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), there are three most effective types of questions to raise students' critical thinking including playground question, brainstorm question and the focal question.

2.2.4 Benefits and difficulties of implementing active learning techniques

2.2.4.1 Benefits of implementing active learning techniques in promoting speaking skill

Increased opportunities for language production

Nunan's comprehensive book on English language teaching (2003) highlights the importance of active learning techniques in promoting speaking skills and language production. He suggests that activities such as pair and group work, role-plays, and debates provide opportunities for students to actively engage in communication, practice speaking skills, and develop their language production abilities. Active learning techniques, such as think-pair-share, group work or questioning provide learners with ample opportunities to actively produce language in authentic contexts. This allows them to practice speaking skills, express their ideas, and engage in meaningful communication, leading to improved speaking abilities. Brown (2001) also emphasizes the benefits of active learning techniques in promoting speaking skills and language production. He advocates for activities such as information gaps, surveys, and discussions, which require students to actively communicate, share ideas, and practice speaking skills, thereby enhancing their speaking abilities and promoting student interaction.

Enhanced learner interaction

Active learning techniques encourage learners to engage in collaborative and interactive activities, which promote interaction among learners. Through discussions, questioning, and group activities, learners engage in meaningful exchanges, negotiate meaning, and express their opinions, leading to improved speaking skills and increased confidence in using the language. Johnson and Johnson (1999) highlights the effectiveness of active learning techniques in promoting student interaction and language production. They argue that when students engage in cooperative learning activities, they are more likely to actively use and practice speaking skills in authentic contexts.

Learner engagement and motivation

Active learning techniques promote learner engagement and motivation, as learners are actively involved in the learning process. When learners are engaged in meaningful activities that require them to use language actively, they are more likely to be motivated and invested in developing their speaking skills. Richards and Lockhart (1996) highlight the role of active learning techniques, such as role-plays, simulations, and debates, in promoting speaking skills and learners' motivation in their speaking process. They suggest that these activities engage learners to use language in meaningful and purposeful ways, providing opportunities for learners to participate in active learning techniques, in their language production and practice, and promoting speaking abilities.

2.2.4.2 Challenges of implementing active learning techniques in promoting speaking skill

Many instructors believe there are some main challenges for them in using active learning techniques in speaking classes. The first disadvantage is the amount of content that needs to be achieved in a lesson which teachers implement active learning strategies (Alemu, 2010). The amount of time for students to think and share their ideas in different activities can affect the lesson content if teachers do not manage their class effectively.

Another negative aspect of active learning technique in teaching speaking is that group work will be unsuccessful if students misunderstand the points and choose not to involve themselves in solving problems in a group (Laurin, 2009).

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive, mixed-methods research. A mixed-methods research includes both quantitative and qualitative approach (Fraenkel et al., 2012). According to Fraenkel and his colleagues (2012), one of the advantages of combining mix methods is that it can help facilitate deeper understanding and provide a more complete set of findings. It allows researcher to identify aspects of a phenomenon more accurately and will gain more valid results by approaching it from different vantage points using different methods and techniques. Particularly, all of the participants were asked to respond to the 33-item-questionnaire. The results were reported with the Statistic Test of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The mean scores would help reveal the teachers' perceptions about implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking. Of equal importance, six participants were then invited randomly for the interview. The semi-structured interview was used to gather qualitative data and provided more insightful understandings about advantages and disadvantages of implementing active learning techniques in speaking classes.

The participants involved in the research were 56 Vietnamese teachers of English from two English language centers where active learning techniques are implemented in teaching speaking. They are bachelor and master degree holders and others got Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Certificate. The informants' age was between 23 and 40 years old, with the majority in their 20s. The participants' experiences in teaching English range from three to twelve years. At the time of the study, teachers were teaching young learners from the age of five to thirteen.

The questionnaire includes 31 closed-ended questions which give respondents given choices about active learning techniques including think-pair-share, group work and questioning, and two open-ended questions to give the participants an opportunity to express their opinions about advantages and disadvantages in

implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking. An ideal questionnaire would include an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire that gain feedback and suggestions from the respondents (McDonough, 1997). A five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* was employed within teachers' perceptions. The participants had to decide whether they *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with this research to allow the interviewer to collect information about advantages and disadvantages in implementing active learning techniques including think-pair-share, group work and questioning. According to Punch (1998), the interview is a very good way to access people's perceptions. One of the advantages of interview is that interviewers can collect more information in greater depth.

In this study, the semi-structured interview was conducted with six teachers who have been working at two English language centers to access their perceptions after the collection of the questionnaire. The interviews lasted 10 to 20 minutes and were took place at a convenient time for the participants. All the participants were reminded to respond in Vietnamese and the answers were audio-recorded, transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim. Transcription involved converting the spoken words into written text, capturing all the nuances of the interview, including pauses, hesitations, and non-verbal cues. Then, the researcher read the transcriptions to become familiar with the data, gaining an overall understanding of the content and context of the interviews about teachers' advantages and challenges implementing active learning techniques in their speaking classes. The researcher identified the interview data into two main categories including advantages and challenges of teachers when they used active learning techniques. These categories were grouped together related codes to create a coherent structure for analysis. This process involved iterative rounds of coding and categorization, refining and revising the categories as needed. The researcher also analyzed the categorized data, examining patterns, and relationships among these two main categories. This involved identifying commonalities, differences in the data, and interpreting the meaning of the categories, discussing their significance, relating the findings to existing literature and in relation to the research questions of the study. In order to report the result of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher presented the findings in a clear and organized manner, using appropriate quotations or excerpts from the interviews to support the findings. The findings were typically reported in the research report or article, along with a discussion of the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

4. Findings

4.1 Findings from the close-ended questionnaire

4.1.1 Teacher's perceptions about active learning techniques

In order to more carefully explore teachers' perceptions about active learning techniques in teaching speaking, a *Descriptive Statistics Test* of individual item from Cluster One would be presented and analyzed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Percentages of teachers' perceptions of active learning techniques

Items	D & SD (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)	M	SD
1. Active learning involves learners in doing activities.	2.7	9.5	87.8	4.31	.72
2. Active learning techniques require learners to use higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.	0.0	16.2	83.8	4.27	.70
3. Active learning can become meaningful when students know how to share their experiences with peers.	0.0	15.1	84.3	4.24	.69
4. Active learning focuses on learners' engagement in the learning process.	0.0	19.3	80.7	4.23	.75
5. Teachers allow learners to listen passively and learn by absorbing information instructed by the teacher.	67.6	28.8	3.6	2.05	.89
6. Active learning techniques provides learners opportunities to apply what they are learning in the course content.	1.8	10.1	88.1	4.26	.70
7. Teachers also play the role as an instructor and facilitator to engage learners in participating in the activities.	0.0	7.8	92.2	4.36	.63
8. Active learning techniques refer to learners' opportunities to construct their knowledge.	0.0	5.1	94.9	4.47	.59
9. Teachers should provide learners with active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, group work and questioning.	0.0	5.5	94.5	4.43	.57
Valid N (listwise)					

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean scores for eight items are higher than the scale 3.5, an accepted mean for high level of agreement. However, item 5 was ranging at the lowest scale in cluster one ($M=2.05$, $SD=.87$). It indicated that teachers disagreed about allowing learners to listen passively and learn by absorbing

information instructed by teachers. Almost all of investigated teachers had a high level of agreement (94.9%) that active learning techniques refer to learners' opportunities to construct their knowledge and teachers should provide learners with active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, group work and questioning. Besides, 92.2% of teachers agreed that teachers play the role as an instructor and facilitator to engage learners in participating in the activities. In addition, 88.1% of teachers affirmed that active learning involves learners in doing activities and provides learners opportunities to apply what they are learning in the course content. Moreover, over 80% of teachers believed that active learning techniques require learners to use higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and allow learners to share their experiences with peers. In contrast, up to 67.6% of teachers did not agree that learners shouldn't listen passively and learn by absorbing information instructed by teachers.

4.1.2 Teacher's perceptions about planning active learning techniques in teaching speaking

The data of six items from Cluster Two of the questionnaire was analyzed to explore the teachers' perceptions about planning active learning techniques in teaching speaking using a *Descriptive Statistic Test*, the result of teachers' perceptions about active learning techniques in teaching speaking is demonstrated in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Percentages of teachers' perceptions about planning active learning techniques in teaching speaking

Items	D & SD (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)	M	SD
10. Teachers are concerned about learners' English-speaking proficiency level when planning active learning techniques in speaking classrooms.	0.0	7.5	92.5	4.31	.61
11. Teachers are aware of individual learner's characteristics to plan for active teaching and learning speaking process.	1.9	5.1	93	4.29	.63
12. Teachers are aware of problem-solving skills when designing active learning activities.	0.0	6.6	93.4	4.31	.57
13. Teachers' plans of active learning techniques may depend on class size, objectives, goals and time duration to complete the activities.	2.1	12.5	85.4	4.19	.71
14. Teachers focus on learners' learning outcomes and learners' participation in designing the activities.	2.5	9.8	87.7	4.20	.68
15. Teachers focus on different active learning techniques such as pair-work, group work and questioning to plan for teaching and learning speaking process.	0.0	4.9	95.1	4.37	.56
Valid N (listwise)					

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean scores for each item are higher than the scale 3.5, an accepted mean for high level of agreement. Table 4.2 shows that 95.1% of investigated teachers agree that teachers should focus on different active learning techniques such as pair-work, group work and questioning to plan for teaching and learning speaking process. Besides, 93.4% of teachers agree that they are aware of individual learner's characteristics and learners' problem-solving skills when designing active learning activities. In addition, 92.5% of teachers confirmed that they are concerned about learners' English-speaking proficiency level, learners' learning outcomes and learners' participation in designing the activities. However, the lowest percentage of agreement (85.4%) in cluster two was about teachers' plans of active learning techniques which may depend on class size, objectives, goals and time duration to complete the activities.

4.1.3 Teacher's perceptions about implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking

The purpose of Cluster Three of the questionnaire was to investigate teachers' perceptions about implementing of active learning techniques in speaking classrooms. The data of eleven items from Cluster Three of the questionnaire was analyzed to explore the teachers' perceptions about implementing of active learning techniques in speaking classrooms using a *Descriptive Statistic Test*, the result of teachers' perceptions about active learning techniques in teaching speaking is demonstrated in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Teachers' perceptions about implementing of active learning techniques in teaching speaking

Items	D & SD (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)	M	SD
16. Teachers should implement active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, groupwork and questioning in speaking classrooms.	0.0	8.8	91.2	4.38	.62
17. The traditional teaching and learning methods should be changed to the implementation of active learning techniques to improve the quality of teaching and learning speaking skill.	18.2	6.1	75.7	3.90	1.10
18. The teachers' implementation of active learning techniques can help learners in taking responsibility for their own learning.	0.0	7.8	92.2	4.34	.62
19. The teachers' implementation of active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, group work and questioning is difficult for learners with low level of English speaking proficiency.	11.5	9.3	79.2	3.99	.91
20. Teachers are concerned about implementing active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, group work and questioning instead of passive learning.	0.0	9.4	90.6	4.29	.63
21. The teachers' implementation of active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, groupwork and questioning is time-consuming in large classes.	43.5	9.2	47.3	3.17	.39
22. The implementation of group work, think-pair-share and questioning allow students to explore peer perspectives, which further develop application of learning speaking.	0.0	4.9	95.1	4.42	.57
23. Teachers should provide learners with more opportunities to participate in the instructional activities such as pair-share and group discussion.	0.0	4.8	95.2	4.36	.56
24. The implementation of active learning techniques should be based on learners' interests and their characteristics.	0.0	18.6	81.4	4.14	.68
25. Teachers use different technological tools such as smartboards, computers and other tools to support the implementation of active learning techniques in speaking classrooms.	2.2	8.4	89.4	4.21	.65
26. Teachers concern about learners' prior knowledge when implementing active learning techniques in speaking classrooms.	2.3	16.1	81.6	4.09	.70
Valid N (listwise)					

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean scores for each item are higher than the scale 3.5, an accepted mean for high level of agreement. Table 4.3 reveals that 95.2% of teachers strongly agree and agree (items 22, 23) that the implementation of group work, think-pair-share and questioning allow students to explore peer perspectives, which further to develop application of learning speaking and teachers should provide learners with more opportunities to participate in the instructional activities such as pair-share and group discussion. 89.4% of teachers strongly agree and agree that they should implement active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, groupwork and questioning in speaking classrooms instead of passive learning, use different technological tools and help learners in taking responsibility for their own learning.

However, up to 43.5% of teachers did not agree that their implementation of active learning techniques such as think-pair-share, groupwork and questioning is time-consuming in large classes. In addition, 18.2% of teachers did not agree that the traditional teaching and learning methods should be changed to the implementation of active learning techniques to improve the quality of teaching and learning speaking skill.

4.1.5 Teacher's perceptions about motivating learners in learning speaking by implementing active learning techniques

In terms of implementing active learning techniques, there are various components suggested to improve learners' motivation. Five items of Cluster Four from the questionnaire aimed to discover the teachers' perceptions about motivating learners in learning speaking by implementing active learning techniques. The data of five items from cluster four of the questionnaire was analyzed to explore the teachers' perceptions about motivating learners in learning speaking by implementing active learning techniques using a *Descriptive Statistic Test*, the result of teachers' perceptions about motivating learners in learning speaking by implementing active learning techniques is demonstrated in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Teachers' perceptions about motivating learners in learning speaking by implementing active learning techniques

Items	D & SD (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)	M	SD
27. Teachers should encourage learners in doing activities and thinking about what they are learning in speaking classrooms.	0.0	7.3	92.7	4.37	.60
28. Teachers' motivation is needed for all learners especially for learners with low level of English -speaking proficiency.	0.0	3.5	96.5	4.40	.53
29. Teachers are concerned about motivating learners' positive attitudes towards their learning may help them with a result of active learning.	0.0	12.5	87.5	4.28	.66
30. Teachers' motivation in learning speaking for learners are difficult when learners are not interested in speaking topics.	0.0	7.8	92.2	4.22	.57
31. Teachers should give compliments to learners who play an active role in classroom activities.	3.3	4.3	92.4	4.28	.69
Valid N (listwise)	56				

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the mean scores for each item are higher than the scale 3.5, an accepted mean for high level of agreement. Table 4.4 shows that 96.5% of investigated teachers agree that teachers' motivation is needed for all learners especially for learners with low level of English -speaking proficiency. 92.7% of teachers strongly agree and agree that they should encourage learners in doing activities and thinking about what they are learning in speaking classrooms and give compliments to learners who play an active role in classroom activities. The lowest percentage of agreement in cluster four (87.5%) was about teachers' concern about motivating learners' positive attitudes towards their learning may help them with a result of active learning.

4.2 Findings from the open-ended questionnaire

4.2.1 Benefits teachers gain by implementing active learning techniques

Most of teachers reported many benefits of implementing active learning techniques related to learners' responsibilities in their learning process, classroom interactions between teachers and learners and among learners, learners' confidence in sharing ideas with peers, teaching and learning outcomes. Particularly, one teacher mentioned:

"Active learning techniques help learners build their confidence by sharing and working with their friends."

Several teachers mentioned that their learners are encouraged to participate in speaking activities by sharing with peers and in groups. They are more interested in expressing ideas with their friends and take responsibilities in completing activities. One teacher shared:

"Active learning techniques help learners take responsibilities for their learning by doing activities in groups or peers."

4.2.2 Difficulties teachers face by implementing active learning techniques

Several teachers wrote many disadvantages they have faced in implementing active learning techniques. One of the main disadvantages is that learners who have low level of English-speaking proficiency are not willing in speaking and doing activities in groups.

They misunderstand the topic and choose not to join in speaking activities in classrooms. One teacher shared:

"Some learners with low English-speaking skills are not willing to join activities. They usually keep silent in class and other learners take all the speaking time."

4.3 Findings from the interviews

4.3.1 The benefits teachers gain when implementing active learning techniques in speaking

4.3.1.1 The benefits teachers gain when implementing think-pair-share technique

Six teachers listed many benefits of implementing think-pair-share technique. Particularly, there were four main advantages. Firstly, Jones (2006) mentioned that think-pair-share technique allows students to generate discussion with peers and higher critical thinking skills among students. Think-pair-share technique should develop the thinking of cooperative learning in terms of knowledge, skills, and problem solving of each student.

Teacher 1 shared that:

"Think-pair-share technique can help students to develop their critical thinking and brainstorming skills to think and give answers. They also have more opportunities to practice English language with peers. For example: the lesson is about the structure "There is/there are...", I usually ask my students to practice this structure in pairs to practice and help each other."

With nearly similar point of view, teacher 5 added:

"Students can be more comfortable to share their ideas and learn with their friends. This technique can help students enhance their critical thinking skills and be interested in the lesson."

Teacher 3 also shared his perspective:

"Students can be more confident and active when sharing their ideas with their friends."

4.3.1.2 Benefits teachers gain when implementing group work technique

All of six teachers think that group work technique is important in learners' active learning English speaking and interacting with others. Teacher 1 and 3 also shared his perspective:

"Students have more opportunities to share with friends and take responsibility for learning when they work in a group."

With the similar perception about students' involvement in working in group, teacher 4 mentioned:

"Students exchange knowledge and learn from each other. They also are more active in their own learning and improve their critical thinking skill."

4.3.1.3 Benefits teachers gain when implementing questioning technique

Most of teachers answered that questions help learners to use their critical thinking skill to think and analyze the information to give responses to teachers. Teacher 5 shared that:

"Questioning technique increased the interaction between teachers and learners and among learners. It helps they improve their critical thinking skill and brainstorming skill to answer."

4.3.2 The difficulties teachers face when implementing active learning techniques in speaking

4.3.2.1 Difficulties teachers face when implementing think-pair-share technique

All of six teachers agreed that there were difficulties when they implement this technique in teaching speaking. Teacher 2 shared that:

"It will become noisy when students work in pairs in a large class."

Teacher 4 supported that:

"The difference about learners' English speaking proficiency is one of disadvantages that affect learners to understand and share ideas with peers."

4.3.1.2 Difficulties teachers face when implementing group work technique

Besides the benefits of implementing group work technique as one of active learning techniques, teacher 3 shared one of the difficulties:

"Students with low level of English speaking proficiency have problems in speaking and sharing with others and students with high level of English speaking proficiency will take more responsibility in a group."

In terms of classroom management, teacher 4 mentioned:

"Teachers will have difficulties in managing learners in a large class because of the noise and discussions of the irrelevant information about the learning topic."

4.3.2.3 Difficulties teachers face when implementing questioning technique

Teacher 5 mentioned one of the advantages of implementing questioning:

"It will be a problem with low level of English speaking proficiency learners because they are too shy and afraid of making mistakes in front of class. Therefore, they do not want to answer and participate in the activities."

Supporting teacher 5's opinions, teacher 6 shared:

"Learners who have characteristics of shyness usually are under pressure when talking in front of the class. Therefore, they will keep silent and will not give answers."

5. Discussion

This section discusses the key findings of the study in relation to relevant studies to answer the two research questions.

5.1. Research Question One: What are EFL teachers' perceptions about implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking?

The findings from the questionnaire and interview indicate that teachers had positive perceptions about the implementation of active learning techniques in teaching speaking, which indicates that teachers consider it important to help students involve in doing activities and take responsibility of their own learning. The findings concur with the literature that indicates the importance of encouraging active roles for students in the learning process (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Capel, Leask, & Turner, 2009; Meyers & Jones, 1993). Findings from the study also show teachers' perceptions in engaging learners' participation in classroom speaking activities to give students more opportunities to express their own ideas and construct new knowledge meaningfully and critically. The findings of the study incorporate previous research by Bonwell and Eison (1991), who proposed a framework with the hope that it can help instructors understand and consider the importance of active learning in

their teaching contexts. According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), active learning includes a wide range of strategies that share the common element of involving learners in doing activities and thinking about the activities they are doing. It implies that active learning is about learning through doing based on teachers' instructions, performing and taking action to be active if learners want to succeed in the speaking class and in their learning process. Similarly, they are also supported by Nguyen (2014), who concludes in his study that the important shift that is from traditional teaching method (teacher-centeredness) to active learning (student-centeredness) occurs a move in Vietnamese teaching contexts. He also mentions that active learning occurs when students of different educational backgrounds and contexts share their personal knowledge and experiences with peers to gain new knowledge of a particular field.

5.2. Research Question Two: What benefits and difficulties teachers have in implementing active learning techniques in speaking classes?

The findings of advantages of implementing active learning techniques including think-pair-share, group work and questioning were useful in teaching speaking. Besides, the findings of disadvantages of implementing active learning techniques helped teachers understand clearly their issues. Teachers mentioned these active learning techniques can provide more opportunities for learners to voice their ideas and take responsibility for their speaking learning process. These findings are supported in Bonwell and Eison study (1991). One of the advantages of implementing these techniques is that learners can learn from each other and think about the activities they are doing. Besides, teachers added that by implementing these techniques in speaking class, learners could practice pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary. By using these active learning techniques, teachers could engage learners' in participation and their active role during the lesson. Teachers also mentioned their facilitative role in enhancing pedagogical content knowledge, increasing learners' participation and interaction among them in classroom speaking activities. These activities can help learners to think and brainstorm to solve problems.

Teachers also shared some difficulties that they face when implementing these techniques in speaking classrooms. One of the main problems is that learners with different level of English speaking proficiency have difficulties in sharing and speaking English. In addition, learners' characteristics can affect their speaking process including their shyness in speaking and their speaking anxiety. Therefore, it is difficult for them to express their ideas related to the topic.

6. Conclusion, implications and limitations

6.1. Conclusion

The findings from this present study provide insights into teachers' perceptions of implementing active learning techniques in teaching speaking as well as benefits and difficulties teachers face using this type of instruction. From the above analysis of the data, it can be concluded that teachers are most positive about this technique in teaching speaking. They assumed that this technique engaged learners' participation and gave them more opportunities to express their own ideas and construct new knowledge meaningfully and critically. Beside those positive thinking about the implementation of the technique, the data from the open item in the questionnaire and interview from the teachers also mentioned some difficulties they faced such as the learners' different levels of English proficiency and learners' characteristics which may inhibit them in practice speaking.

6.2. Implications

Regarding teachers, the interaction between teachers and learners or learner-learners could be challenging if teachers did not provide opportunities to learners to speak and take responsibilities for their learning process. There is a need to adopt active learning techniques in speaking classrooms and to engage learners in doing activities.

With regard to learners, they should be independent learners and play their active role in their learning process. As for curriculum designers, it is necessary for them to set their goals and plan to design speaking activities in their teaching process.

6.3. Limitations and suggestions for further research

It could be concerned that these results can be generalized with careful consideration, given the small sample size ($n=56$). Furthermore, the accessible teachers for interviews are six teachers and are only from two English Language Centers; therefore, this study might have seen as bias to some extent. Secondly, time allocation also inhibited the researcher from taking one more research instrument.

Based on such limitations, it is recommended that future research should explore the implementation of active learning techniques in a large scale of research with observation to make the findings more reliable.

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Conflicts of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest about this article.

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