

**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI
UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION**

GRADUATION PAPER

**A STUDY ON INFORMATION GAP ACTIVITIES
IMPLEMENTATION IN TEACHING SPEAKING
SKILLS FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS
AT FELTE, ULIS, VNU**

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ABSTRACT

Of four skills taught in tertiary education, speaking has gained its prominent position due to its good response to society's demand. Under the influence of communicative language teaching (CLT), out-dated teaching methods in forms of drills and memorization have been shifted to communicative approach with the exploitation of information gap activities. As a result, information gap activities (IGA) have been widely used at language spoken institutions like ULIS, VNU.

The researcher carried out a study titled **“A study on information gap activities implementation in teaching speaking skills for first year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU”**. The aim of this study was to investigate the types of IGA mostly used, the strategies applied during IGA and the obstacles as perceived by teachers and students at Division I. To fulfill these objectives, the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative methods based on the theoretical background. Thanks to participants' cooperation and the utility of data collection instruments, including questionnaires, in-depth interviews and classroom observations, three research questions were fully answered. Results showed that exchanging personal information was preferred by teachers owing to its simplicity and flexibility. Moreover, forming groups according to proximate seat positions, delivering instructions by “say-do-check” and “step-by-step” techniques, actively monitoring the class and giving feedback at the end of the activity were more frequently used than other techniques. In addition, the research also displayed the obstacles faced by teachers and students related to students' levels and class layout.

Based on these findings, some implications were made for a better exploitation of IGA in teaching speaking. The study was expected to benefit not only teachers and students at Division I but also other researchers interested in this field.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	
CA	Communicative approach
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
ED	English Department
FELTE	Faculty of English Language Teacher Education

IGA	Information Gap Activities
PPP	Presentation – Practice - Product
ULIS	University of Languages and International Studies
VNU	Vietnam National University

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the research problem, rationale for the study, its scope and significance. The three research questions are also presented along with the aims and objectives of the study. Besides, the organization of the research paper is disclosed as well.

1.1. Statement of the problem and rationale for the study

Among all the considerable changes in English teaching method, the most important turning point is the shift from grammar-based approaches to communicative language teaching (CLT) approach which puts the main focus on communicative competence. So far, CLT has gained the prominence nationally and internationally with its aim of making meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities (Richards & Schmidt, 2001, p.90). In Vietnam, University of Languages and International Studies is one of the first pioneers in CLT employment.

CLT emphasizes the development of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.155). Speaking is regarded as the most demanding and significant due to its role in reality. One of the main principles of teaching speaking in CLT approach is planning communicative tasks based on the concept of information gap - *a gap between the two persons in the information they possess* (Nunan, 2003). Hence, information gap activities (IGA) which can create the real purpose of communication through gaps in information possessed has become a preferred activity in facilitating speaking skill.

At the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, ULIS, VNU, there have been limitations in the use of IGA for first year students who are in the period of developing and improving speaking skills. Moreover, both teachers and students are not fully aware of benefits of IGA, beside some studies considering freshmen to be the subjects. Thus, it is necessary to conduct **a study on information gap activities implementation in teaching speaking skills for first year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU.**

1.2. Aims of the study and research questions

The study is to identify the most common kinds of information gap activities which have been used in teaching speaking skills for first year students at the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, ULIS, VNU, their implementation strategies

applied by teachers and the difficulties addressed by both teachers and students during the IGA using process.

The aims are expected to be fulfilled by answering three following questions:

1. When teaching speaking skill, what kinds of information gap activities do the teachers use at English Division I, Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, ULIS, VNU?

2. When teaching speaking skill, what IGA exploitation strategies do the teachers apply?

3. What are the obstacles in using information gap activities in teaching speaking as perceived by the teachers and students at English Division I, ULIS, VNU?

1.3. Scope of the study

Due to time constraints, the study was carried out with only IGA implementation in teaching speaking for the first year students, including kinds, strategies applied and challenges arising from IGA exploitation process not benefits of IGA or solutions for a better use. First year students were chosen to be the research subjects as they were focused to form and practice language skills including speaking.

Teachers teaching speaking at Division One were the main subjects owing to their good knowledge of IGA. They have actively carried out those activity and they could master the real situation and give a precise evaluation. Then, students were involved since they play the center role in all classroom activities including IGA.

With the limited conditions such as different schedules and learning by credits, only two teachers with a high frequency of IGAs exploitation report would be the main sources of information. Based on results from questionnaires, these two teachers would be figured and their students would be engaged in the study.

1.4. Significance of the study

Among the limited researches on IGA implementation, most studies gave priority to high school students rather than the first year students. To address this gap, the writer carried out a study regarding 1st year students as the target population. When the findings of the study are exposed, they will firstly benefit teachers who are in charge of improving students' communicative competence. In detail, teachers will realize the kinds of IGA mostly used, strategies applied and obstacles faced and then make suitable changes in their existing teaching methods. Secondly, students who are lacking in IGA knowledge will have a better understanding of what they are being taught and what should be

improved so that they can make best use of them. Finally, the study can be used as a source for researchers with the same interest for further exploration into the issue.

1.5. Organization of the study

The rest of the paper consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature review – displays the background knowledge for the whole study and a critical review of the previous studies related to the topic.

Chapter 3: Methodology – provides a big picture of participants, research design, including sampling, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results and discussion – analyzes data, gives comprehensive discussions and some implications.

Chapter 5: Conclusion – summarizes the major findings of the study, the limitations and offers suggestions for further studies.

Supplementary includes references used for the research and appendices consisting of questionnaires, classroom observation checklist, interview questions and some analyzed data.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part, an overview of literature background related to the study is exposed, laying the solid foundation for the next parts. Key concepts of speaking, speaking in communicative language teaching and information gap activity are defined. Furthermore, a critical outlook of related studies is attached for a better understanding of the research problems.

2.1. Teaching speaking in communicative approach

The nature of speaking

Brown (1994) once defined speaking as “*an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information*”. In other words, speaking is “*a two way process between speaker and listener, involves the productive skill of speaking & the receptive skill of understanding*” (Byrne, 1998 cited in Nguyen, 2012) and it depends on “*the context which occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment and the purposes for speaking*” (Burns and Joyce, 1997). Consequently, the two participants, especially the speaker, play an indispensable role in anticipating and producing the expected patterns of specific discourse situation in order to maintain the conversation.

Nunan (1995) stated that the single important aspect to learn English successfully is by mastering the art of speaking - the ability in using oral language to explore ideas, intentions, thoughts and feelings to other people as a way to make the message clearly delivered and well understood by the hearer. This definition shares the same viewpoint with Brown’s in the real procedure of speaking - the speaker encodes the message appropriately and the listener decodes the message.

All in all, the above definitions provide a deep insight into the nature of speaking that requires speakers not only to know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary, but also how to organize the discourse for listeners to understand. That is called “*the active use of language to express meanings*” by Cameron (2001 cited in Nguyen, 2012).

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT), which mainly focuses on communicative competence, is believed to enable learners to be more confident when interacting with other people, increase fluency in the target language and meet the objectives of language learning (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). In detail, Brown (1994,

p.226 cited in Nguyen, 2012) emphasized speaking & listening skill, writing for specific communicative purposes, authentic reading texts and its curriculum or instructional objective reflects the particular needs of the target learners in the domains of reading, writing, listening or speaking for a particular course.

2.1.1. Teaching speaking in CLT

Speaking, along with writing in CLT is a productive skill whose main goal is *“oral fluency which can be defined as the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately and without too much hesitation”* (Byrne, 1980, p.9). That goal can be achieved by letting students freely express their ideas with their own language, increasing students’ talking time, and decreasing the teacher’s talking time (Sharbain, 2009, p.23). Adding to this, Breen and Candlin (1980 cited in Nguyen, 2012) described teacher roles as a mean to *“facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants & the various activities and the texts”*. In other words, students are considered the central and the teacher task is to create the best conditions for learning.

According to Scott (1981, p.70), a communicative approach (CA) to speaking emphasizes the use of language above the level of the sentence, which makes teaching speaking under CA different from that of structural one focusing on the production of grammatical accurate sentences. In order to achieve the ability to use the language above the level of sentences, *“teacher will have to bring students from the stage where they are mainly imitating a model from some kinds, or responding to cues, to the point where they can use the language freely to express their own ideas”* (Byrne, 1980, p.10 cited in Nguyen, 2012). Teaching speaking skill consists of the same stages as learning any other skills (setting objectives-preparation-practice-transfer), but only in the case of teaching for communication, there is difference in types of language items and activities (Scott, 1981, p.7).

2.1.2. Principles of teaching speaking in CA

Among teaching speaking principles in CA offered by linguists, Nunan’s suggestion (2003), consisting of 6 prominent principles as following, makes sense with the purposes of CLT, and secures the significance of communicative tasks /activities and students’ autonomy:

- Be aware that the teaching speaking is closely bound up with receptive skill work.
- Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy.
- Plan communicative tasks that are based on the concept of information gap.

- Give chance for students to talk by using group/pair work, and limiting teacher talk.
- Plan tasks that involve negotiation of meaning.
- Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking.

(Nunan, 2003)

Speaking activities

Since creating communicative activities is one of the main principles of teaching speaking, Oscar (2011) proposed several characteristics of the best speaking activities that meet CLT's requirements.

Firstly, the best speaking activities are relevant to students' interests, stimulate them to talk and at right language levels as "*good communicative teaching is learner-centered, not teacher-centered*" (Richards and Rodgers, 1996, p.64).

Secondly, the best activities contain an element of choice as to how students can do them, what they say, to allow them to express their own personalities at least a little.

Thirdly, they are localized and often made or adapted by the teacher who knows his/her students best. It is always a good idea to personalize and customize coursebook exercises where possible, using pictures, local names, face and places to replace those in the book.

Fourthly, good speaking exercises have either an information gap (I can't complete the exercise until I get the information which my partner has) or an opinion gap (I don't know what you think so I have to ask and listen to find out) which makes them more meaningful than traditional drills.

2.2. Information gap activities

2.2.1. Definition

An important aspect of communication in CLT is the notion of information gap, which "*refers to the fact that in real communication people normally communicate in order to get the information they don't possess*" (Oscar, 2011). As all students have had different experiences in their lives – experience gaps, Oscar suggested exploiting the experience gap among students to engage them in meaningful communication.

Harmer (1991, p.48) once defined information gap as "*a gap between the two persons in the information they possess*" and in order to gain the same situation, students are forced to interact, which makes the language classroom experience more meaningful and authentic. Obviously, students are the users of IGA, not the teacher, though the teacher can certainly demonstrate the activity.

Johnson and Morrow (1981, p.62) also shared the same viewpoint with Harmer, in which they agreed that IGA is the motive for interaction among students. Lastly, Hubbard

and Thornton (1983) generalized IGA as a practice activity in which two or more students engaged do not share exactly the same information.

2.2.2. Types

Based on the definitions mentioned, linguists provide a variety of classifications of IGA. Norman and Levehn (1986, p.100, cited in Nguyen, 2012) offered two kinds of IGA, namely puzzle form and personal questionnaire. To be specific, in puzzle form activities, students are regarded as pieces of the puzzle with different information and supposed to interact to complete a task. While in personal questionnaire activities, students work together, compare personal information to find out their own similarities and differences.

Doff (1989, cited in Nguyen, 2012) classified IGA into 3 kinds, namely guessing games, IGA for pair work and exchanging personal IGA. In guessing game, students are forced to ask questions to find the information about the things. IGA for pair work can be done in various ways according to the number of students owning the information. For example, one student has some information, others have to find out by asking questions or each student in each pair is given different information and they have to communicate to locate the differences or one student has information, and tells it to others. As for exchanging personal IGA, it is to motivate students to talk about their own lives, interests and experiences.

Based on the number of participants owning information, Ellis (1999) categorized IGA into 2 types, including one-way and two-way activities as follows:

One-way IGA

One-way IGA are the activities in which only one participant is given information to share. That person is called “the knower” and the others are “the guessers” (Doff, 1989). Of all sub-categories of one-way IGA, guessing game – “*the process of discovering by one individual or group of an item of information known to another, with some on its transmission*” (Ur, 1981) is the most popular one and the most common types of guessing game are guessing the picture, guessing the sentence, guessing famous people and what’s my line?, etc.

Two-way IGA

In the light of Ellis’s view, two-way IGA in which each student is given an incomplete piece of information consist of the following popular types:

a) Jigsaw activities

Each student has the “puzzle” existing in forms of sentences or photos, and they must cooperate well with each other and use their language resources to communicate meaningfully to fit all the pieces into a whole picture.

b) Detecting difference activities

Two students are given two identical pictures except for several differences. They are required to locate these differences by describing and comparing pictures.

c) Exchanging personal information activities

This type of two-way IGA is considered one of the easiest and most interesting forms of communicative activities by Doff (1989) as it could motivate students to share information about their lives, interest and experiences create real purposes for communication and foster mutual understanding.

The researcher was totally persuaded by this classification owing to its comprehensive view so the research paper would be based on Ellis’s suggestion.

2.2.3. Procedures to conduct IGA

Generally speaking, IGA are conducted according to five main steps as follows:

- Divide class into pairs
- Give each student in each pair half of the information with the instruction of not looking at their partner’s information.
- Let student prepare silently
- Get students to do the activity.
- Invite students to perform before class, comment on how the language can be improved.

(Levihn & Hendenquist, 1986, p.101)

2.2.4. Benefits of IGA in teaching speaking

Doff (1989) insisted that IGA can provide students with “*intensive and interesting language practice*” as during the process of IGA, they are really exchanging information and using language communicatively. Hence, IGA are described as “*a nucleus around which a range of other tasks and exercise types can be constructed*” (Nunan, 1989, p.122 cited in Nguyen, 2012).

Oscar (2011) systemized the benefits of IGA into 4 main points. Firstly, IGA create more communication among students by extending their speaking practice and speaking time, which are effective in enhancing their language and foster their mutual understanding.

Secondly, IGA build students’ confidence as the groups’ spirit, the comfortable and non-threatened atmosphere created during IGA process motivate them to speak more, freely express their ideas using their own language.

Thirdly, motivation can be high in IGA; since the information is hidden, the experience gap is exposed; students are stimulated to join the activity. They equally devote themselves to the task with a sense of collaboration and cooperation not the capacity discrimination.

Last but not least, besides developing fluency and accuracy, IGA also improve other sub-skills such as negotiation of meaning, clarifying meaning, gathering information and rephrasing making decision through interaction. Related to this point, Doughty & Pica (1986) declared that “*IGA are likely to give the most opportunities for negation of meaning*”.

2.2.5. Time for IGA in teaching speaking

Harmer (2001 cited in To et al, 2011) figured out three possible stages for a language lesson as following:

- Input or “presentation stage” is the stage in which “finely-turned language” is introduced to students and students are “*encouraged to employ the cognitive strategy*” so most of the work is done by the teacher. Should students only stop at this stage, they may get a lot of language items separately stored away without ability to retrieve these items when needed (Harmer, 1989).
- Practice stage is the stage where the target language is isolated and practised in a controlled way so that accuracy can be achieved. At this stage, both the teacher and students do the work.
- Production stage is the stage where students produce the new language they have learnt. This stage with the focus of fluency instead of accuracy is the best time for students to develop strategies for communication that an over-concentration on presentation & practice would almost certainly inhibit (Harmer, 1989).

However, the presentation – practice – production (PPP) procedure came under sustain attack in the 1990s as it was clearly teacher-centered and did not reflect the nature of teaching and learning. Nunan (2001) contributed a better classification in which teaching language is based on task-based approach whose focus of classroom activities is on the task, ultimately on communication. In Willis’s (1996) flexible model, learners carry out a communicative task, without a specific focus on form, report and discuss how they have accomplished it, and then listen to a fluent speaker doing the same task (communication – report – presentation) (cited in To et al, 2011).

2.2.6. Strategies of using IGA in classes

Organizing the class

The success of IGA partially depends on the way teachers organize their classrooms. Sharan (1992) offered two ways to group the class, namely teacher-selected groups and learner-selected groups. Most experts on cooperative learning stated that the former is the best, at least until students become proficient at collaboration when they can group themselves by interest, or by self-directed projects.

Based on students' abilities, BBC world service advised to form mixed-ability groups and same-ability groups. In the mixed-ability groups, the more able students can help others to perform the work. While in same-ability groups, the teacher can leave the groups of faster learners to get on with the work on their own and give extra help to individual learners in the slower groups (Teachers in Action, BBC world service).

The researcher finds the techniques suggested by Davis (2009) understandable and easy to follow.

- Grouping students of proximate seat positions is the way allowing teachers to choose students next to, behind or in front of them to assign groups to save time as students don't have to move.
- Randomly assigning is another way to form groups by mixing students' abilities to help weaker students gain more confidence under the guidance of the stronger and foster learners' collaboration and equality.
- Grouping students according to their common points such as abilities, sex, hobbies, etc is used to avoid the feeling of being de-motivated among students and help them to cooperate more effectively.
- Grouping students according to their common English ability is the way to create equal participation among students of the same level.

Giving instructions

To get students involved in the activity, the teacher has to instruct the way they are supposed to do. There are some techniques to give instructions as follows:

- "Step-by-step" or "feed-in": the teacher breaks down instructions into small, separate steps and then gives students one instruction at a time to help them understand completely.
- Demonstrate it, "model" it or "show-don't-tell": instead of talking about what students must do, the teacher shows what to do by giving a demonstration which is easier to understand than an explanation and reduces teacher's talking time.
- Say-do-check: the teacher follows 3 steps for each instruction, namely saying the instruction, getting students to do it, and checking that they've done it correctly before going on to the next one. Using this technique, the teacher can tell straight away if students have not understood something and can take action immediately.

- Student recall: after giving instructions in English, the teacher checks that students understand everything by saying “Tell me what you have to do in Vietnamese” or “Say it again in Vietnamese”, which is helpful for students at lower levels.

(Nguyen et al, 2003, cited in To, 2011)

Giving corrective feedback

In CA, mistakes are seen as positive steps towards as learning and a perfect lesson is a lesson full of students’ mistakes and students’ correcting themselves and each other. Real learning takes place when students are given the opportunity to internalize the language and retain it in long-term memory (Nguyen et al, 2003). It is, therefore, better for the teacher to elicit the correction from students instead of getting them to repeat everything without thinking, like a parrot. As for oral work, Nguyen et al (2003) listed four principles of correcting needed to follow:

- Focus on what they have got right, not what they have got wrong.
- Praise students for correct answers or even for partially correct answers.
- Avoid humiliating students or making them feel that making mistakes is bad.
- Give students chance to correct themselves by pointing out what is not good enough.

2.3. Related studies

Regarding the research matter worldwide, the writer could find only two related studies, namely “*Information gap task: do they facilitate second language acquisition?*” by Doughty and Pica (1986) and “*Information gap activities: a communicative experience in the classroom*” by Oscar (2011). As conveyed from their titles, they did not focus on any participants or organizations but covered IGA theories as well as the experience in classroom during the process of using IGA which are helpful for the writer to build up the background knowledge.

To the researcher’s best knowledge, there have been only 9 authors in ULIS, VNU studying IGA exploitation in teaching speaking. The very first graduation paper explored the use of IGA was “*A study on the use of IGA for oral practice to develop speaking skill for 10th form students in Hanoi secondary schools*” written by Nguyen Thi That (1999) who just focused on teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards IGA and then exposed some recommendations to get the best of it.

Like the aforementioned graduation paper, the five next ones continuously put much attention to IGA implementation in teaching speaking skills at high school context. These studies, to some extent, successfully figured out the current situation of exploiting IGA but they did not consider the kinds of IGA used and the obstacles students faced

during the process of IGA implementing. Besides, the questionnaire designed did not meet the requirements of the research questions proposed.

Before 2012, there was only one graduation paper tackling the exploitation of IGA and its benefits in teaching speaking for freshmen at ULIS, VNU, namely “*Using IGA to enhance speaking skill for first year students at ED, ULIS, VNU*”, conducted by Nguyen Thi Thu Trang (2006). Nevertheless, the visible limitations of the study were merely to aim at the benefits of IGA which were clearly posed in literature review and not to provide readers with classroom observation report. Since then, there have been two studies on IGA, namely “*The exploitation of IGA in teaching speaking skills for students of the international standard program*” submitted by Nguyen Hoang Giang (2012) and “*Teachers’ difficulties in using IGA to teach speaking skills for the first year students at ULIS, VNU*” written by Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu (2012). The researcher appreciated these researchers in the way they indicated problems, then carried out them rationally. The former would be more perfect if the author supplied readers a better understanding of background knowledge; the latter would be better if mostly used IGA were figured out before examining factors affecting the choices of IGA and students’ difficulties should have been considered as they are the center of every educational action.

2.4. Summary

In this chapter, an overview of literature background, including basic concepts of teaching speaking in communicative language, information gap activities has been provided. Moreover, related studies and literature gaps have also been disclosed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methodology, including participants and research design. In detail, the information of participants, sampling method, data collection and data analysis will be discussed.

3.1. Target population

With the aim of addressing the most common kinds of IGA used, the strategies applied and obstacles students and teachers encountered during the process of exploiting IGA, the researcher intentionally regarded 500 first year English major students who have learned English for at least five years and 24 speaking teachers at Division I, FELTE, ULIS, VNU as the target population to gather data.

According to course outline for ULIS freshmen by Division I for academic year 2012-2013, after the first year at university, their English proficiency should be B1+ in the global Common European Framework. As for speaking level, by the end of the course, they will have been able to pronounce clearly, intelligibly but sometimes mispronunciations can occur, initiate, maintain and intervene in a discussion on a familiar topic, cooperate in a discussion by summarizing the point reached, confirming mutual understanding and keeping the development of ideas on course. The textbooks used are *Q: skills for Success listening and speaking* by Jaimie Scanlon (Oxford) which is helpful to develop students' English for academic purposes, and *Speak out* by Antonia Clare JJ Wilson (2011) for social purposes.

3.2. Research design

To answer 3 research questions raised, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach was adopted in the study. By adopting quantitative approach which arrives at more objective conclusions and eliminates or minimizes subjectives of

judgment, the level of reliability when performing mass survey can be improved (Baseley, 1970) but it restricts the power of explanation. Hence, qualitative approach – “generally examining people’s words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways which closely represent the situation experienced by the participants” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) was also used. With the aim of discovering patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of the research topic, qualitative approach gives a deeper understanding of experience from the perspectives of the participants and helps to obtain a more complete picture of the educational process, a holistic, in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Gay, 1996).

3.2.1. Sampling

The very first step needed for a perfect research was to have a good sample which meets the requirement so-called “representative” and must be large enough to correctly represent a population. Generally speaking, the larger the sample, the better, as it not only gives greater reliability but also enables more sophisticated statistics to be used. Furthermore, determining the size of the sample will also have to take account of non-response attrition and respondent morality, i.e. some participants will fail to return questionnaires, leave the research, return incomplete or spoiled questionnaires (missing out items, putting two ticks in a row of choice instead of only one).

The teachers

Firstly, 23 speaking teachers at division I who have had from 1 to more than 10 years of experience in teaching English would be selected to complete the questionnaire. Based on statistics, 79,2% of them have taught English from 1 to 4 years and most of them acquired the MA degree in TESOL; others are pursuing an MA course at ULIS, VNU.

Secondly, from the result of questionnaire conducted among 23 teachers, the two participants who reported the average frequency of exploiting IGA in teaching speaking were selected to take part in the interviews. Their background information, including gender, age, qualifications, experience and personality was illustrated in the table below.

Teachers	Gender	Age	Qualification	Years of experience	Personality
A	Female	24	B.A	1	Quite strict in the lessons but friendly outside class
B	Female	28	M.A	5	Funny, easy-going and

					active
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Table 1: Teachers' background

The students

As the two teachers were chosen, the researcher deliberately selected 71 students taught speaking by these teachers to be the sample accounting for 14.2% of the whole population, whose background information was described as follows.

Class	Number of students	Major	Years of studying English	Level
1	24	English language teacher education	5.125	B1
2	23	English language teacher education	7.625	B1
3	24	English translation & interpretation	6.3	B1

Table 2: Students' background

Classroom observations were carried out in 4 speaking lessons of these classes. Both teachers and students were carefully observed during the process of using IGA so that the strategies and the obstacles were precisely figured out.

3.2.2. Data collection method

3.2.2.1. Questionnaire

Definition

To achieve the target aims superficially, namely the most common kinds of IGA, the strategies used, and obstacles in implementing IGA in teaching speaking for first year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU, questionnaire – a natural tool to collect information, was deliberately used in the study. According to Brown (2001, p.6) questionnaires “*are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of question or statement to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers*”. Questionnaire is the only practical approach when the researcher needs to deal with many respondents.

Benefits

The main attraction of questionnaires is their unprecedented efficiency in terms of researcher time and effort. By administering a questionnaire, the researcher can collect a huge amount of information in less than an hour and the personal investment required will be a fraction of what would have been needed for interviewing the same number of

people. Furthermore, if the questionnaire is well-constructed, processing the data can also be fast and relatively straightforward, especially by using some modern computer software (Gillham, 2000).

Notes

However, the main disadvantage is that questionnaires are not flexible in comparison to interviews as the questions can't be modified once they have been given to the respondent, nor can the questionnaire probe the respondent for further information (Gillham, 2000).

There are two kinds of questionnaire (one for students and one for teachers) with some things in common. The questionnaire firstly included a title to identify the domain of the investigation, provide the respondents with initial orientation, and activate various content schemata. Next, short and brief instructions were also displayed as they played a key role in determining the participants' feelings toward the questionnaire and in specifying how they should go about answering the items. More than that, a description of IGA including definition and common types was also added to help participants remind of IGA. Then, it was followed by questions designed based on three research questions and a final 'thank you'.

3.2.2.2. Interview

Definition

To minimize the limitations of questionnaires and get detailed description of IGA exploitation, in-depth interview, which has been defined as "*a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation*" (Cannel & Kahn, 1968), was also used in the research. It is a method that involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals.

Benefits

Unlike in a questionnaire, an interview enables the researcher to ask respondent to clarify unclear answer and follow upon an interesting answer.

Notes

However, in an interview, the respondents may be inhibited in answering sensitive questions, which is often reduced if a questionnaire is used. Furthermore, it's impractical to use interview if the nature of research requires dealing with many respondents.

The two participants were interviewed face-to-face in English and the interviews were recorded by a tape-recorder. A checklist of open-ended questions was designed for the interviews based on the research questions in advance.

3.2.2.3. Classroom observation

Definition

As Mason (1996, p.60) noted, observation usually refers to “*methods of generating data which involved the researcher immersing in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions, events, and so on, within it*”. When collecting data using observational techniques, certainly careful descriptions of learners’ activities without unduly influencing the events in which they engaged would be revealed. The data is often collected through combinations of field notes which can involve detailed impressions of the researcher’s intuition, impressions and even questions emerging.

Benefits

Classroom observation has some more advantages over questionnaire and interview which mainly relies on individual’s self-reports of the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors. The validity of the information from questionnaire and interview is contingent on the honesty of the respondent (Mason, 1996, p.60). However, people do not always give an honest answer; a study that merely based on self-report is often questioned in terms of reliability. Observation, which involves “*the researcher immersing in a research setting*” and systematically observing the reality, helps enhance the validity and reliability of the information if combined with other methods like questionnaire and interview. More than that, it provides the researcher with the opportunity to collect large amount of rich data on the participants’ behavior and actions within a particular context. Overtime and repeated observations, the researcher would gain a deeper and more multilayered understanding of participants and the contexts (Mason, 1996, p.60).

Notes

As for classroom observation, the researcher set criteria to follow - classroom observation checklist beginning with general information of the classes studied and a set

of criteria. The criteria consisted 3 main parts in which each part was designed to answer each research question. At the end of the checklist, there was also an assessment of students' involvement during exploiting IGA.

3.2.3. Data collection procedure

3.2.3.1. Design the instruments

In order to answer the 3 research questions, research instruments were designed relevantly to 3 main parts, including kinds of IGA mostly used, strategies applied and obstacles encountered during the process of exploiting IGA.

3.2.3.2. Pilot the instruments

a) Initial piloting

- Select 4 friends from class 09E13 who are accustomed to survey research
- Ask them to go through the items and answer them, and then to provide feedback about their reactions and the answers they have given.
- Ask for any comments (whose wording they don't like, items whose meaning is not 100 percent clear, items are unnecessary, etc)

b) Final piloting

- Administer the questionnaire to a group of respondents who are in every way similar to the sample the instrument was designed for. In detail, the respondents were 50 students and two teachers from class 12E5 & 12E8. The pilot was carried out on 25th March, 2013 in room 301 A2 and 406 A2.
- Ask for any comments (whose wording may be ambiguous, which are too difficult for respondents to reply to, which should be eliminated, etc).

3.2.3.3. Edit

Based on the comments collected from piloting process, some alterations and the final version of the questionnaire were made.

3.2.3.4. Collect

Questionnaire

- Announce respondents (teachers and students) about where and when to administer the questionnaire in advance.
- Explain the purpose of the survey, address terms of confidentiality, explain the format of the questionnaire and indicate how long the questionnaire usually takes.
- Ask them if they have any difficulties, or do not understand any places and explain to them.

- Tell them how to get in touch with the researcher later if they want to or if they still have any question.
- Express the gratitude to them.

In-depth interview

- Inform the selected teachers in advance so that they are clear about the research.
- Ask the questions according to the criteria set and use the tape-recorder to record the conversation.

Observation

- Inform students and teachers who had answered the questionnaire in advance so that classroom observation can be easily carried out and highly-supported.
- Observe the class and note down all the information needed

3.2.4. Data analysis method

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data from the questionnaires, in which the features of sample were regarded as variables, and every value of the variable and the number of participants choosing it was also be listed. For instance, with the 1st research question, the kinds of IGA most frequently used were considered the variable; next the researcher listed the four options with their frequency. In other words, the data collected from questionnaires would be calculated, transferred into numerical form and summarized into graphs for further analysis and comparison with the data from other sources.

As for qualitative data such as participants' answers to open-ended questions during in-depth interviews and classroom observation, the researcher sorted out the data (content) into groups which could be specific (key words) or general (themes). These themes might be emerged from the data themselves or built on the predetermined theories.

3.2.5. Data analysis procedure

Questionnaire

- Count the number of respondents in each option given.
- Collect the responses from open-ended questions for further analysis.
- Transfer the results received into bar or area charts.
- Give comments, judgment based on the data collected and background knowledge from literature review.

In-depth interview

- Sort out the data (content) into 3 main parts (3 research questions).
- Use the information collected to illustrate the data analysis.

Classroom observation

- Compare the data collected from classroom observation with that of questionnaires and interviews.

- Give comments for those similarities/differences.
- Use the information collected to illustrate the data analysis.

3.3. Summary

In this chapter, the methodology of the study was presented and rationalized. Sampling method, data collection and data analysis method were provided with the use of a combination of three instruments namely questionnaire, interview and classroom observation.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the main findings of the research related to three research questions are presented, laying the groundwork for further discussions, implications and suggestions for the next chapter.

4.1. Research question 1: Information gap activities mostly used by teachers in teaching speaking skills for 1st year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU.

4.1.1. Qualitative results from interviews and classroom observations

Interview with Teacher A

According to teacher A, the most frequently used type of IGA was exchanging personal information, followed by guessing games; while detecting difference activity was sometimes used and jigsaw activity rarely appeared in her lesson. Being asked about the reasons for that choice, she stated exchanging personal information was the best one to increase students' talking time and foster mutual understanding. Through some minutes of sharing information, students could be more active in the cozy atmosphere. Moreover, that activity could be easily adapted to various situations, the course's requirements and easily carried out compared to others. To her explanation, guessing game could be exploited to introduce new lessons, review previous ones and evaluate the progress of the class with only undemanding teaching aids such as chinks and cards. Most of the time she used it, students were inspired and encouraged a lot. As she wanted to vary the task and let students have new experience, detecting difference activity was sometimes used. In her opinion, that activity was very time-consuming and hard to adapt to the course' requirements but occasionally students were fond of sharing pictures and locating similarities/differences, which was effective in enhancing students' interaction and collaboration. Finally, teacher A admitted that she seldom applied jigsaw activity in her lessons because of its complexity and ineffectiveness.

Interview with Teacher B

Teacher B stated that exchanging personal information was always exploited in her lessons, along with a regular use of jigsaw activity, an occasional use of detecting difference and guessing game. To her mind, all these kinds of IGA were useful for teaching speaking but they were in different ranges of adaptability to the course book and students' levels. In detail, she found it easy to employ exchanging personal information activity in her lesson owing to its flexibility and familiarity to students. She also made use of jigsaw activities to vary the task and get students to make acquaintance with real

life where they had to find out other “puzzles” to complete the “whole picture”. Moreover, the materials used in that kind of activity were variable in the course book and other sources. She also put her faith in the effectiveness of detecting differences and guessing games on students’ speaking ability. However, these kinds of IGA were limited in adaptability so she sometimes exploited them to diversify tasks, change the environment and motivate students.

Classroom observations

Among 4 lessons observed, there were 2 lessons employing exchanging personal information. In one lesson, students were asked to figure out their friends’ unique points and the other was to explore students’ different reactions to a situation. In the other lessons, jigsaw and guessing game were used to introduce new lessons. Apparently, these results were homogeneous with the one analyzed in previous part.

4.1.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

Teachers’ questionnaires

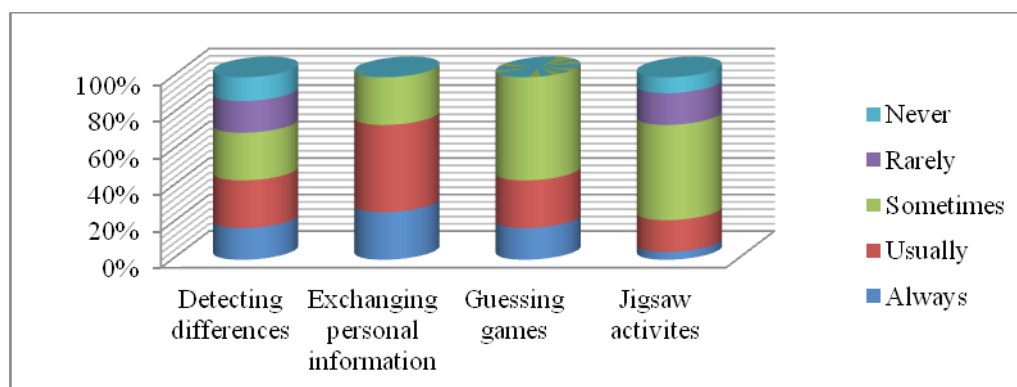


Figure 1: Kinds of IGA mostly used by teachers in teaching speaking

Referring to kinds of IGA mostly used in teaching speaking, most teachers revealed that they had frequently employed exchanging personal information in their lessons. It can be seen on the figure 1 that exchanging personal information accounted for the majority of frequency. According to the researcher’s calculation, that kind of IGA got the mean of 4, equivalent to a regular use when regarding always as 5, usually as 4, sometimes as 3, rarely as 2 and never as 1; followed by guessing games, detecting differences and jigsaw activity with the means of 3.6, 3.2, 2.9, respectively (see the appendix).

Students’ questionnaires

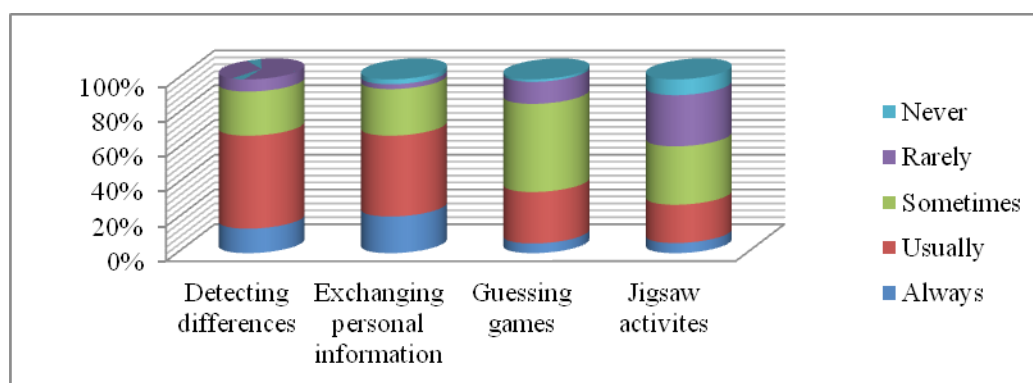


Figure 2: Kinds of IGA mostly used from students' perception

From students' perspective (figure 2), detecting difference activity was mostly used by their teachers in teaching speaking with a mean of 3.8, followed by guessing games, exchanging personal information and jigsaw activity with the means of 3.5, 3.3, and 2.8 respectively. Interestingly, that result was a little bit different from teachers' evaluation. Perhaps, students didn't have a thorough understanding of IGA or this result was from their expectations, not the real situation.

4.1.3. Discussion

There was an agreement among lectures teaching speaking at Division I about the effectiveness of exchanging personal information owing to its simplicity and flexibility, which was also appreciated by Doff (1989) who regarded it as one of the easiest and most interesting forms because students are excited to talk about their own lives and experience. Kippel (1984, cited in Nguyen, 2012) strongly recommended pedagogues to apply that activity to their lessons to create a real purpose for communication and motivate students. Besides, guessing games were exploited by all participants in a less frequency due to its limitation to adaptability to the course book and students' levels.

There was a disagreement between the two participants about the effectiveness of jigsaw activity which was rarely used by most teachers. Although teacher B found it rather efficient when using that activity, teacher A rejected to apply it because it exercised a waste of time and lacked adaptability. Hess (2001, cited in Nguyen, 2012) once approved that jigsaw activity can increase students' interaction as well as negotiation of meaning and evaluating skills. Hence, he proposed that type should be employed more in teaching speaking for students.

Detecting difference activity was sometimes used by all participants as it was time-consuming and demanding while the benefits were not really outstanding.

As stated above, there was a difference in teachers' results and students' perception. This can firstly be explained by a lack in students' knowledge. Obviously, students – the central of every educational action should be provided enough knowledge of what they are experiencing to take the best advantage of it. The second reason is students are more interested in detecting difference activity than other kinds so they take it for the mostly used one.

4.2. Research question 2: The strategies applied by teachers to exploit information gap activities in teaching speaking skills for 1st year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU.

4.2.1. Forming groups

4.2.1.1. Qualitative results from interviews and observations

Interviews with Teacher A

Teacher A admitted when conducting IGA, she regularly grouped her students according to proximate seat positions. To her mind, this technique was time-saving and convenient, especially for classes with rigid layout. Students at close positions having a better mutual understanding were assigned into one group, which was useful to motivate their collaboration without being shy or inactive. Randomly grouping students was usually used in her lessons to give students a chance to work with different partners. However, she pointed out that this technique was a little bit time-consuming and unfavorable for timid students compared to a familiar and comfortable environment.

Teacher A also preferred an occasional use of grouping students according to their common points because it could motivate students to exchange their ideas and sharing opinions more. Nevertheless, this technique, along with assigning students into groups according to common English abilities which was rarely used by teacher A, was very time-consuming and demanding. When forming groups according to common abilities, teachers were required to have a good understanding of students' levels. As a result, she rarely employed it although this technique could guarantee equal participation among students and teachers could spend more time for low English level students. Adding to this, it could create a sense of inequality between high-leveled and low-leveled groups and students could feel like being discriminated and humiliated.

Interview with Teacher B

Grouping students randomly was the technique teacher B exploited most frequently in her lessons. According to her, this technique could enhance students'

collaboration and mutual understanding. When students worked in mixed-ability groups, they could learn a lot from their friends. No student was the dominant one for the whole lesson; all students involved in the activity, thus it was worth employing this technique ignoring the noise and the time it cost.

Teacher B regularly made use of forming groups according to proximate seat positions. She explained that this technique was time-saving, convenient for teachers and sometimes as effective as randomly assigning students but it could restrict students' collaboration and interaction. Unlike teacher A, teacher B preferred a more frequency in grouping students according to common English ability and common points. In her opinion, these techniques could encourage weak students, make them more confident and active instead of being shy, reserved or keeping silent. She also admitted that the effectiveness of peers' learning, to some extent, was hindered as in groups of same English ability or common points, students couldn't offer much help to their peers. Being asked about the uncomfortable environment of being put in an inferior group, she emphasized that it was upon teachers' ability, *"try to form groups with same abilities but don't let students know the way you assign them."*

Classroom observations

In two observed lessons in which IGA were conducted, teacher A varied grouping techniques, including according to seat positions and randomly by asking students to count numbers and then arranged students of the same number into a group. In contrast, teacher B always chose to group students according to their close positions. According to the researcher's note, teacher B's grouping process took place shortly and students could settle down in just one minute. Certainly, her technique caused less noise than teacher A's techniques which cost her about 3 minutes on average to stabilize students. However, forming groups according to approximate seat positions still had some disadvantages. Firstly, students spent more time chatting with their friends without paying much attention to the task, which was one of the reasons causing the noise during the activity. Secondly, there were some dominant groups which often completed the task before others and then started to make noise. Thirdly, the researcher noticed that perhaps, students were fed up with working with familiar faces, the same styles so they were not inspired in the task. While in teacher A's lessons, students were more active and motivated. There still

was the phenomenon of dominant groups; however, this off-task behaviors seemed less serious compared to forming groups according to approximate positions.

4.2.1.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

Teachers' questionnaire

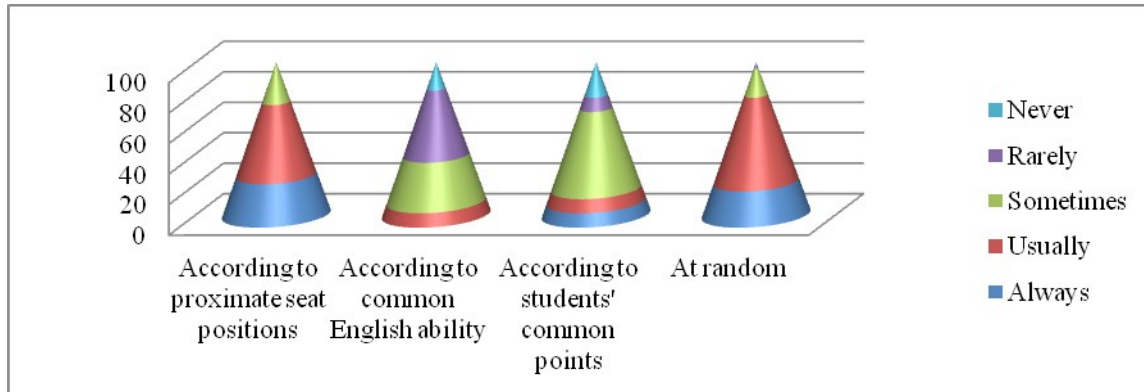


Figure 3: Techniques chosen to form groups by teachers

It can be clearly seen from figure 3 that most teachers at Division I admitted assigning students into groups according to proximate seat positions frequently, followed by grouping students randomly, according to students' common points and English abilities. Obviously, letting students work with their friends at close positions was considered the most effective technique to be used.

Students' questionnaire

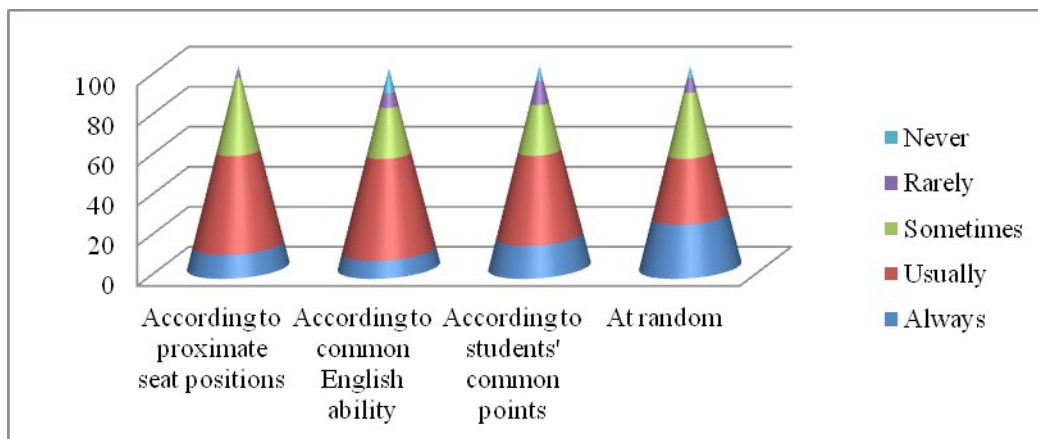


Figure 4: Techniques to form groups from students' expectations

Being asked about the way they wanted their teachers to form groups in exploiting IGA, most students agreed that randomly grouping and according to proximate seat positions were the most suitable techniques to be used with the means of 3.634 (see figure 4). While forming group according students' common points and English abilities were also recommended with the means of 3.493 and 3.32 respectively. Interestingly,

students expected their teachers to vary their techniques so all kinds mentioned were highly accepted.

4.2.1.3. Discussion

From the data analyzed, forming groups randomly and according to close positions gained the dominant position in teachers and students' choices. Obviously, these two techniques were very time-saving and undemanding; however, they could prevent students' collaboration. Although forming groups according to English levels and common points were rarely used by teachers, students highly expected to apply them in lessons. Each teacher had posed out both advantages and disadvantages of each way in real situations but they should keep their students' expectation in mind and try all techniques to meet students' requirements.

4.2.2. Giving instructions

4.2.2.1. Qualitative results from interviews and classroom observations

Interviews with Teacher A

Among techniques mentioned, teacher A gave priority to step-by-step one in which she gave students one instruction at a time, not all list of instructions all together to help students understand them completely, especially when there was a lot of information in instructions. According to her, exploiting this technique, she could let students out of any confusion even the weak. She also preferred an occasional use of say-do-check and show-don't-tell techniques when the tasks were easy to follow. By following 3 steps for each instruction, including saying the instruction, getting students to do it, and checking that they have done it correctly before going on to the next one or showing them what to do by giving a demonstration, she motivated students to perform the task. She insisted that using say-do-check, teachers could tell straight away if students hadn't understood something then take action to make sure that they understood it and a demonstration was easier to understand than an explanation. Lastly, she rarely employed student recall as students were encouraged to speak in English all the time. Only when the tasks were too complex and students were at low levels did she ask them to repeat what they would do in Vietnamese to provide them with a full understanding.

Interview with Teacher B

Unlike teacher A, teacher B usually used say-do-check and show-don't-tell techniques to deliver instructions to students as they could create better environment for

the class. In her opinion, when using these techniques, students not only understood the rules completely but were inspired a lot. They were very active so they preferred doing something different to passively receiving. She noted that students were not allowed to say any words in Vietnamese in her speaking lesson unless she would punish them, which also was the reason for her refusal of employing student recall technique. She added permitting students to speak in Vietnamese was antiscientific as it would diminish their negotiation of meaning, critical thinking, and asking for clarification, etc. Being asked about step-by-step technique, she admitted using it occasionally when the tasks were complex and students seemed confused. By breaking down the instruction into small steps, checking for comprehensions after each step, she could make all students clear about the instruction.

Classroom observations

During two teachers' lessons, the researcher noticed that some students seemed unclear about task's rules and had to ask their friends for explanations and clarifications after the task had already begun, even some refused to do the task as they didn't know what required to do.

In teacher A's lesson, she broke instructions into small and separate steps before delivering to students but students still found it hard to catch the supposed actions. The following example illustrated a typical instruction given by teacher A.

Example 1

Teacher A: I'll let all of you play a game called "guessing game". Do you know that game? (Some students said yes, some said no). Ok, here are the rules. Each group will assign a representative to stand here, like me. Each of them will be given 2 pictures. Your task is to ask them any questions that you think related to the picture so that you can guess what the picture is about. One point for the right answer. Understand? (All said yes). Good, so now let's start the game.

Since all students said they understood instructions, teacher A ignored checking their comprehensions so some students were confused and asked their friends the rule in Vietnamese.

The next example demonstrated teacher B's technique to deliver the instruction of a jigsaw activity.

Example 2

Teacher B: Now I will give each of you a part of the whole picture like this. Remember! Don't show the picture to your partners, ok? (Yes) Good. (Deliver the picture). Do you all have the picture? (Yes). Ok. Now look at your picture. It's only one part of the whole picture, right? So you will work in your group, tell your friends about your picture without letting them see it, ok? The winner is the group who can complete the picture first, ok? So what do you have to do now, Lan?

Teacher B spent some minutes checking students' understanding but to the researcher's note, some students intentionally showed pictures to their friends in order to be the winner, which was of no effectiveness.

4.2.2.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

Teachers' questionnaire

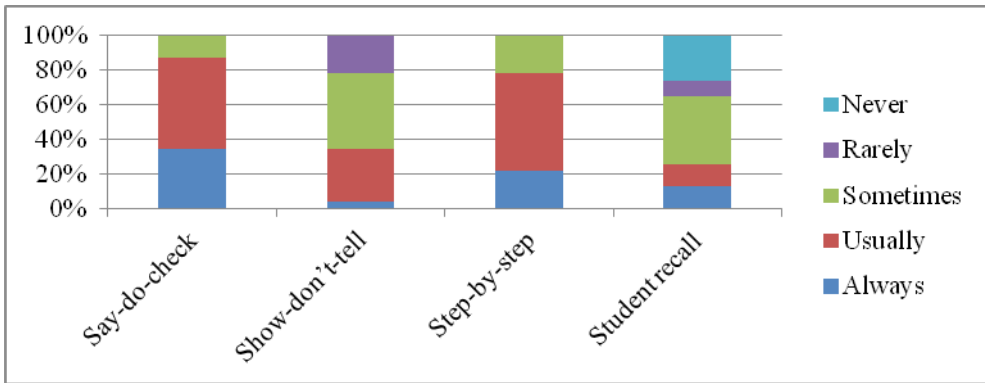


Figure 5: Techniques chosen to give instructions by teachers

Referring to the technique used to deliver instructions when exploiting IGA, 56.6% of teachers stated that they regularly employed say-do-check and step-by-step techniques while 26% refused to use student recall (figure 5). Calculating the means of all variables, the researcher was surprised that say-do-check gained the dominant position with the mean of 4.2, followed by step-by-step, show-don't-tell and student recall with the means of 4, 3.2, 2.8 respectively.

Students' questionnaire

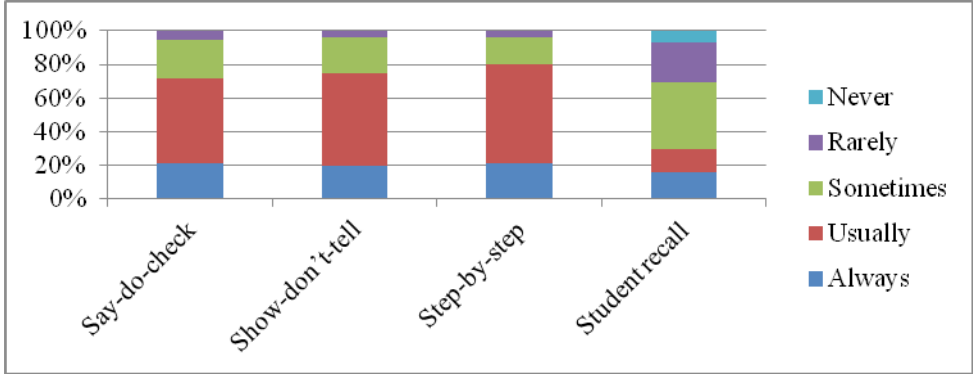


Figure 6: Techniques to give instructions from students' expectations

As for students, 59% of them wanted teachers regularly to break down instructions into small and separate steps and then deliver to them (see figure 6). Show-don't-tell technique was preferred to say-do-check and student recall was also expected to be used less.

4.2.2.3. Discussion

All teachers at Division I admitted the effectiveness of step-by-step and say-do-check techniques in helping students understand instructions before going into the task. Richard (2006 cited in Nguyen, 2012) suggested that for the tasks which were unfamiliar with participants or too complicated for their level, step-by-step technique should be employed in delivering instructions. Obviously, teachers at Division I had a good choice of giving instruction techniques. However, the fact that nearly 20% of students couldn't understand clearly the instruction was still a problem leading to the ineffective exploitation of IGA. For this problem, one reason could be pointed out was that Vietnamese students who were familiar with traditional education method at low level schools were shy to ask for explanation from teachers so they preferred seeking for their friends' help or doing other tasks. As a result, students got worse and worse; no improvement was made and the teacher kept on applying these techniques. The next reason was involved with teachers' checking instruction process. Caroselli (2006 cited in Nguyen, 2012) once emphasized on the necessity of asking comprehension questions in form of "Yes/No" questions hence, teachers should reconsider and improve their checking students' understanding techniques.

4.2.3. Teachers' role

4.2.3.1. Qualitative results from interviews and observations

Interviews with Teacher A

Regarding teachers' action during IGA, teacher A stated that she often sat or stand quietly in the corner to observe the class as many students were shy when they noticed the teacher's presence, even some stopped talking when seeing her coming towards them to avoid being criticized when making mistakes. To her mind, the teacher's presence would be an interference so by observing the class from the corner, she could create a more comfortable environment and students would feel free to speak in the way they wanted. This technique could also reinforce students' negotiation of meaning as they

were forced to ask for explanation, clarification from their friends and make use of their own resources. However, to keep students in task, teacher A still controlled the class and provided help if necessary.

Interview with Teacher B

As for teacher B, she chose to actively monitor and wander around the class as her main methods. Unlike teacher A, she said doing so she could control the class and check whether students were doing what supposed. Being aware of the teacher's presence, students concentrated more on the activity, minimized the use of mother tongue. In fact, teacher A set the rule – “there was no Vietnamese” in her speaking lesson so it was understandable when she moved around the class to check whether students obeyed that rule or not. Besides, she also insisted on teacher's role as a facilitator who assisted students when they were in trouble or unknown about something. As for other techniques, she emphasized their ineffectiveness on students' participation due to the teacher's absence.

Classroom observations

Like the result from interviews, teacher A often sat in her chair to observe the class while teacher B usually wandered around the class to help students. From the researcher's notes, in teacher A's class, some students neglected their duties and did off-task activities but some groups were eager to use their own resources to complete the task. Here was an example showing the way they assisted each other.

Example 3:

Student 1: I like reading books especially scientific books.

Student 2: I like it too but I like entertainment books more.

Student 1: Entertainment books? What is it? Do you mean “ Sách giải trí”?

Student 2: Oh, yeah.

Student 1: It's playbooks.

Student 2: I like playbooks more.

In teacher B's lessons, most students focused on the task under the control of the teacher who actively wandered around the class to facilitate the procedure. In this following example, teacher B was regarded as a source and students rejected to ask for their friends' help.

Example 4:

Student 1: *If I were in that situation, I would repair all the irrigation systems to provide plants with enough water. You know it's very important.*

(Other students nodded their heads)

Student 2: *I agree. More than that I would improve the quality ofOh what to say (seeing the teacher moving towards them). Sorry teacher, what can we say “hạt giống” in English?*

Teacher B: *seeds.*

Student 2: *Oh, thank you. I would improve the quality of seeds*

4.2.3.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

Teachers' questionnaire

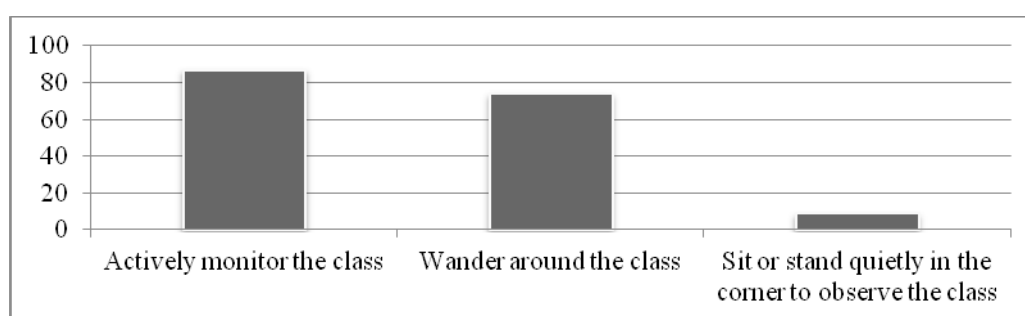


Figure 7: Techniques chosen to monitor the class by teachers

It can be clearly seen from the figure 7 that 87% of teachers agreed that actively monitoring the class was the best way to control their students during the activity, 73.9% admitted the effectiveness of wandering around the class while only 8.7% sat or stand quietly in the corner to observe the class. These results were similar to teacher B's statement.

Students' questionnaire

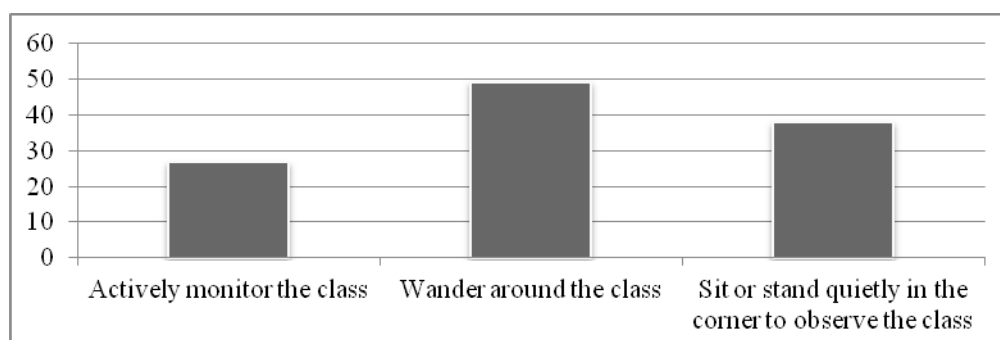


Figure 8: Techniques to monitor the class from students' expectations

Being asked about the way they wanted teachers to do during the task, 49.3% of students expected teachers to wander around the class. Unlike teachers' evaluation, 38% of students preferred teachers' absence to actively presence (see figure 8).

4.2.3.3. Discussion

Obviously, actively monitoring gave teachers a better control of the class by limiting students' use of mother tongue, off-task behaviors and ensured task completion. However, this technique might lessen the effectiveness of IGA as it intervened negotiation of meaning process among students, thus hindered the benefit of fostering second language acquisition. On the contrary, teacher's presence could enhance meaning negotiation process and peer assistance that could better students' speaking ability and critical thinking. Netherless, this technique still arose some drawbacks. Firstly, teachers were unable to check whether students were doing the task properly or not. Secondly, not all the mistakes were recognized and corrected due to students' limitations of linguistic ability and therefore students could repeat their friends' mistakes. Furthermore, 57.75% of students were shy to talk, 19.72% of them were afraid of being criticized by others so it should be taken into consideration about teachers' role during the task to reduce that situation.

4.2.4. Giving corrective feedback

4.2.4.1. Qualitative results from interviews and observations

Interviews

Concerning teacher's giving corrective feedback, both of teachers chose to encourage cross check among groups and take notes typical mistakes of students and then correct all at the end of activities. To teacher A's mind, when letting students work on their own way, the best method to limit their repetition of mistakes was to encourage their cross check. She confirmed she seldom gave correction while her students were working as teachers' intervention might discourage them and decrease the authenticity of communicative activities. As a matter of fact, in the real communication, there would be no one in charge of pointing out mistakes for them so they should be free to make mistakes and then correct by themselves to master the second language. To teacher B's explanation, she often moved around the class, listened to students' speech, noted down

mistakes and corrected all at the end of the activity because she didn't want to demotivate students or destroy the smooth flow of the task.

Classroom observations

Teacher A

As mentioned above, teacher A only sat in her chair to observe the class and helped students when necessary so most of the corrective feedbacks were performed by students. According to the researcher's notes, most mistakes figured out were of grammar, pronunciation and expressions. Here was a typical example of cross check among students in teacher A's lesson.

Example 5:

Student 1: I like sleeping in bed late on Sundays. It sounds interesting.

Student 2: Yeah, I also like it. Sleeping is my only love

(Other students laughed)

Student 3: I dislike it. I spend my Sundays to go out with my parents.

Student 4: "to go"? No. Going. "spend time doing something".

Student 3: Ok, I spend my Sundays going out with my parents.

Teacher B

Teacher B actively monitored the class, encouraged students to speak in English and noted down all the mistakes students made. When she went around, students seemed to concentrate more on their work and asked for her help about vocabulary or structures. At the end of the task, teacher A gave comments on both strong and weak points such as coherence, students' use of transitional words, etc. Next, she provided students with some ways to start and end the presentation like "That's what I want to mention here". Lastly, she spent more time correcting students' wrong pronunciation. Below were some examples illustrating the way she delivered feedback. She used a piece of paper to help students pronounce the sound /j/, let them pronounce the single sound, then words like job, just, July and the sentence "George has just had a job in selling jeans" individually, in pairs and groups. During this process, there were some shy students who didn't dare to stand up to raise their voice. Teacher A motivated them to read and exclaimed them sincerely. At the end, she focused on grammar mistakes by writing the whole sentence on the board and facilitated students to correct by themselves.

Example 6:

Teacher B: (Write the sentence “It was to product the bad quality” on the board and asked students) Is there any mistakes in this sentence, class?

Students: (silently)

Teacher B: Do you know the word “product”.

Students: Yes.

Teacher B: What kind of part of speech is that word?

Students: It’s a noun.

Teacher B: Good. So can we put a noun here?

Students: No. It’s a verb. Produce (some spoke in a low voice)

Teacher B: Ok, so the word should be here is

Students: Produce.

Teacher B: oh, very good.

4.2.4.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

Teachers’ questionnaire

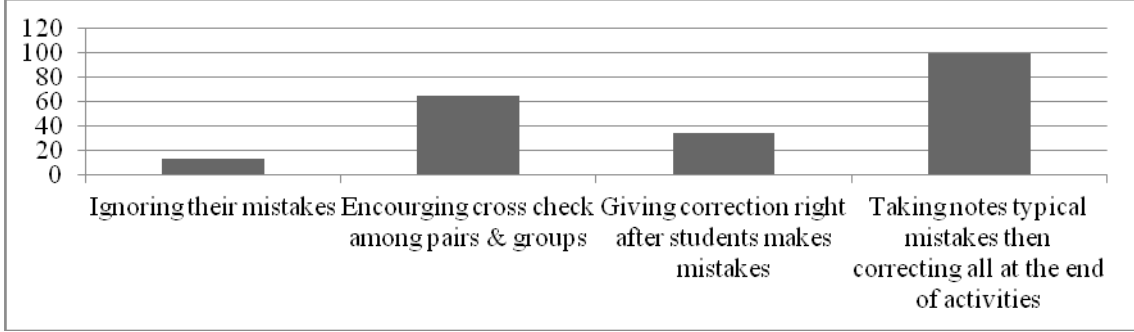


Figure 9: Techniques chosen to give corrective feedback by teachers

Interestingly, 100% of teachers appreciated taking notes of typical mistakes and then correcting all at the end of the task (figure 9). Like two interviewees, more than 65% of participants agreed with the effectiveness of encouraging cross check among groups to enhance students’ collaboration. While only 34.78% said yes to giving correction right after students made mistakes and 13% chose to ignore their students’ mistakes. Among them, there was one respondent choosing all the techniques given. She clarified that it depended on the kinds of mistakes, students’ levels and the aim of activity (accuracy-focused or fluency-focused) to decide when to use these techniques.

Students’ questionnaire

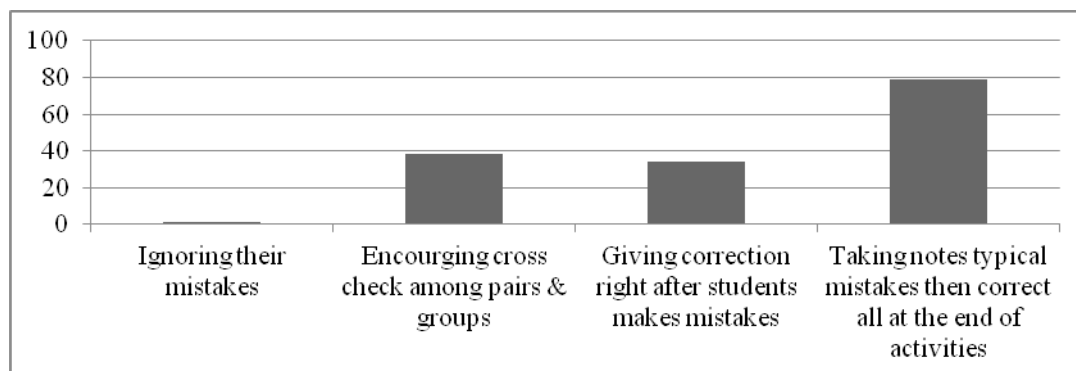


Figure 10: Techniques to give corrective feedback from students' expectations

As for students, it can be seen from figure 10 that 78.9% favored teachers' correction at the end of the task. 38% suggested crosscheck among pairs and groups. 33.8% agreed to let teachers give correction right after they made mistakes and only 1.4% admitted teachers' ignorance of their mistakes (see the appendix).

4.2.4.3. Discussion

Crosscheck among students and later feedback correction were preferred by both teachers and students. Nguyen et al (2003) also proposed peer correction and teachers' eliciting in correcting oral work. Apparently, these techniques were proved to be good for students and learning process. Since one of teaching speaking rules was to let students freely express their ideas and make mistakes, these techniques could ensure the nature of speaking and teaching speaking. Although nearly 20% of students admitted that they were afraid of being criticized when making mistakes, most of them accepted being pointed out and given comments by teachers, which was a good sign for further improvement.

4.3. Research question 3: The obstacles in using IGA as perceived by teachers and students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU

4.3.1. The obstacles in using IGA as perceived by teachers at FELTE, ULIS, VNU

4.3.1.1. Qualitative results from interviews and observations

Interviews with Teacher A

Referring to the obstacles in using IGA in teaching speaking, teacher A posed out 4 major challenges. Firstly, it was the class layout that limited her choice of IGA and the effectiveness of the task. Because of the rigid setting of tables, she couldn't organize activities needing students' free movement. Even when working in groups of 3, students found it hard to maintain eye contact with each other. Hence, she ought to choose simple

tasks like guessing game and exchanging personal information which didn't need much movement.

Secondly, teacher A stated that it was very time-consuming to prepare for an IGA. To her explanation, the course guide and textbooks were so harsh that the suitable kinds of IGA to exploit were very complicated. Teachers had to brainstorm the task, prepare cards, and find ways to lubricate the procedure. She gave an example of a jigsaw activity in which she had to find out a story matching with the given topic, paraphrase new words so that students had no difficulty understanding them, cut them into small parts, plan the procedure, etc. It was such a complex and demanding process that teacher A sometimes rejected to apply jigsaw activities to her lessons.

The next challenge pointed out was Vietnamese students' habit. As usual, they were shy and inactive in the activity, which restricted their speaking and communication skills. Additionally, in IGA, students were advised to share the information with others to fit into the whole picture or detecting differences so students' silence contributed a lot to the failure of IGA exploitation. Consequently, teacher A paid more attention to these students, gave them more chances to raise their voice and mend their ways. She revealed that some even refused to talk when being asked so she must make use of marks to force them.

The last difficulty that teacher A faced with when conducting IGA was students' levels. As aforementioned, she didn't appreciate assigning students according to their common English ability but gave a priority to form groups according to approximate positions. She explained better groups would finish the task first, they often made noise and disturbed others. While the other felt uncomfortable and unwilling to participate in groups so she was unable to control them, not to say, she only observed the class from the corner.

Interview with Teacher B

The only obstacle teacher B faced with was rigid class layout. Sharing the same view point with teacher A, she admitted the negative impact of unsuitable class setting on IGA exploitation. As she often formed groups according to their common points and English ability, the time needed to settle down students was considerable. Moreover, rigid class layout limit her choices since not all of the activities were easy to carry out. Finally, teacher B preferred wandering around the class to noting down students' mistakes and

assisting them but the class setting hindered her movement. As a large number of teachers at Division I regarded students' use of mother tongue as one of the main difficulties in exploiting IGA, the researcher asked for teacher B's opinion. As a result, she disagreed with that statement because of "no-Vietnamese" rule set in her class.

Classroom observations

Teacher A

During 2 lessons of teacher A, there were some problems arising because she formed groups randomly. Students didn't cooperate well with each other. Some refused to do the task; some found it hard to make acquaintance with such dominant members. Instead of focusing on the task, they turned to others and made noise. Teacher A only sat on her chair so she couldn't realize the real situation but believed that they were actively participating in group work. While students of low levels used their mother tongue to finish the task. Especially, the researcher noticed some pairs wholly spoke in Vietnamese under no recognition of the teacher.

Teacher B

Teacher B chose forming groups according to students' common points and abilities hence it took her more than 3 minutes on average to stabilize the class, which was time-consuming when IGA was used as a warm-up activity. The problems arose when some students felt reluctant to move from their seats. They fed up with standing up and finding other seats so some often volunteered to be the last people to leave for the new place, and that feeling could demotivated them in later tasks. As stated in previous part, students in teacher B' class had difficulty understanding the instruction. Using say-do-check and show-don't-tell techniques, she had to paid more time for checking students' perception. Regarding students' cooperation among groups, the researcher realized that some cases pretended to cooperate when they noticed teacher A's presence. Besides, "no Vietnamese" allowed in the class challenged students of lower levels so they asked for the teacher's help instead of learning from their friends.

4.3.1.2. Quantitative results from questionnaires

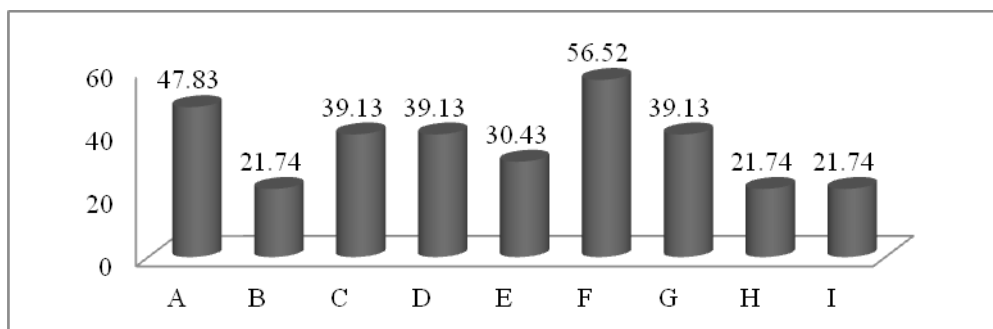


Figure 11: Obstacles faced by teachers when exploiting IGA

Question 6: What obstacles do you encounter in using information gap activities in teaching speaking? (you can choose more than 1 option)

- A. Class layout is not suitable for activities.
- B. I find it hard to design an information gap activity that is suitable for the objectives of the lesson.
- C. It's time-consuming to prepare for a lesson using information gap activities.
- D. Students are too lazy or shy to speak in front of the class.
- E. Students do not cooperate well with each other.
- F. Students' levels are different.
- G. Students use their mother tongue too much.
- H. The class is too noisy to control.
- I. The quality of teaching aids such as cassette and projectors is poor.
- J. Others (please specify):

It can be seen from the figure 11 that all of the given difficulties were faced by teachers at Division I. In detail, 56.52% of teachers had difficulty in students' level; 47.83% were challenged by class layout which limited the choice of IGA and forming groups. 39.13% found it hard to manage IGA preparation, students' habit and their use of mother tongue. 30.43% admitted that students' incooperation contributed a lot to the failure of IGA. Last but not least, teachers also complained about class noise and poor quality of teaching aids.

4.3.2. The obstacles in using IGA as perceived by students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU Students' questionnaire

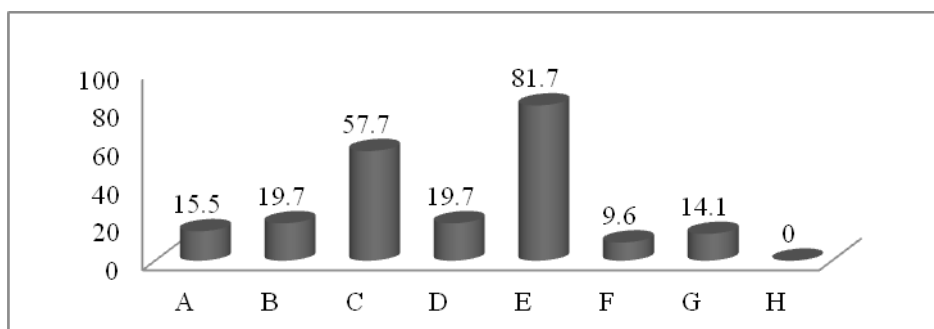


Figure 12: Obstacles faced by students when joining IGA

Question 6: What difficulties do you encounter when joining information gap activities in teaching speaking? (You can choose more than 1 option)

- A. My partners do not cooperate with me.*
- B. I am afraid of being criticized by others when making mistakes.*
- C. I am too shy to talk.*
- D. I can't understand the instructions.*
- E. I lack words/structures to express my ideas.*
- F. The class is too noisy.*
- G. The task is too difficult for me.*
- H. No difficulty at all*
- I. Others (please specify):*

Of all the difficulties given, nearly 82% of students declared that they lack words/structures to express their ideas during IGA activity which directly affected the aim of students' fluency (see figure 12). 57.75% blamed for their bad habit of being shy and inactive in the task. The other reasons were being afraid of being criticized when making mistakes; not understanding the instruction; their friends' incooperation; the difficult task and the noisy class. All of these reasons partly hindered the effectiveness of IGA in teaching speaking.

4.3.3. Discussion

To sum up, there were 2 main obstacles both teachers and students faced with in exploiting IGA, namely student factor and environmental factor. Firstly, it was student side, including students' linguistic ability that prevented them from smoothly expressing their ideas, bad habits of being shy and inactive during the task which reduced students' collaboration and cooperation. Secondly, environmental factor consisting of unsuitable class layout and lack of needed materials prevented teachers from diversifying tasks and students' stimulus. Another thing needed taken into consideration was students' difficulty understanding instructions. Not to say, without knowing what to do, students couldn't involve in the negotiation of meaning process and improve their speaking ability.

4.4. Summary

This chapter has displayed the main findings of the study from questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. Some discussions have also been attached to give readers' a full understanding of the problem.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter, major findings of the study are summarized together with the outcomes of the whole research. Some implications for better exploitation of IGA are also be posed out. Moreover, the research gives some suggestions for further studies based on the limitations and the obstacles during the process of the study.

5.1. Summary of the findings

The study has led to some main findings about IGA implementation in teaching speaking skills for 1st year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU owing to the results from questionnaires of 23 teachers, 2 interviews, questionnaires of 71 students and 4 observed lessons.

Research question 1: Kinds of information gap activities the teachers use at English Division I, FELTE, ULIS, VNU?

Among 4 types of IGA offered by Doff (1989), exchanging personal information is the most frequently used one in teaching speaking due to its simplicity and flexibility. Through interviews, each teacher gave their own reasons for their choice and IGA benefits as well as IGA drawbacks were presented, which facilitates other teachers to have a better choice of IGA.

Research question 2: IGA exploitation strategies the teachers apply

Some strategies applied during IGA exploitation process, namely forming groups, giving instructions, monitoring the activity and giving corrective feedback were studied. Most of the teachers preferred a more frequent use of grouping students according to proximate seat positions, say-do-check and step-by-step techniques to give instructions, actively monitoring the class, taking notes typical mistakes and then correcting all at the end of activities. Obviously, each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages. According to researcher's opinion, one of the main weaknesses of these techniques is that they lack students' support as they expect their teachers to group randomly and wander around the class during the activity so it is worth considering students' needs to gain their collaboration.

Research question 3: The obstacles in using IGA in teaching speaking as perceived by the teachers and students at English Division I, ULIS, VNU?

Students' levels and rigid class layout are two main reasons preventing teachers from diversifying kinds of IGA and its effectiveness. The two interviewed teachers suggested choosing simple kind of IGA to minimize its ineffectiveness.

The most outstanding problems faced by students are lack of words/structures and their shyness. These factors all come from students themselves so the best solutions can be listed is to motivate students during the task.

5.2. Limitations

Due to time restraints and the researcher's limited knowledge, the study still remains some limitations. Firstly, only two teachers were wholly involved in the research hence the results were not fully covered all the cases. The study was conducted in a small scale of questionnaire feedbacks; therefore, its data and information may not embrace every aspect & situation of the issue. Secondly, the researcher only studied some main

strategies of IGA led to the superficial evaluation of IGA effectiveness. In fact, there was no scale or measurement for assessment but only a generalization from data collected. Lastly, the study was limited on providing detailed and critical solutions for the obstacles faced.

5.3. Suggestions for further research

As aforementioned, the study still has some limitations that need to be improved in further studies inspite of the researcher's effort. In addition, it's strongly recommended that future research extend the scale of participants to have more precise results. Research into the obstacles faced and detailed solutions is also suggested. Besides, a qualitative research with a great measurement of effectiveness of IGA exploitation is valuable and highly supported. Finally, researchers with the same interest can shift the priority to other subjects such as second year students or primary school students.

5.4. Implications

Based on the findings of the research, teachers at Division I should choose the most suitable kinds of IGA, strategies to apply it that meet students' requirements and minimize the obstacles faced. Furthermore, students who are the centre of every educational action should be aware of IGA to make use of them.

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APPENDIX 1A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

My name is Trần Thị Hồng from class QH09E13. I am currently taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi. My graduation paper is titled “***A study on information gap activities implementation in teaching speaking skills for first year students in Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, ULIS, VNU***”. This survey questionnaire is designed to gather information on the current situation of using information gap activities in teaching speaking for freshmen. Your assistance in completing the following questions is highly appreciated. All of your opinions will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Note:

- **Definition of information gap activity (IGA):** IGA is a practice activity in which two or

more students engaged do not share exactly the same information and they need to talk to each other to complete a task (Thornton, 1987).

• **Kinds of IGA:**

- ✓ *Detecting differences:* Two students are given two pictures, which are identical except for several differences. They are required to locate the differences by describing and comparing pictures.
- ✓ *Exchanging personal information:* Students ask questions to find out the similarities/differences among them.
- ✓ *Guessing game:* One student has a picture/sentence/piece of information and the other has to ask questions to guess what it is about.
- ✓ *Jigsaw activities:* Each student has one of a few pieces of the “puzzle”, and they must cooperate to fit all the pieces into a whole picture.

❖ **General information**

- *Name:*
- *Gender: Male/Female*
- *Years of teaching:*
- *Qualification:*

Part I: Kinds of information gap activities mostly used by teachers in teaching speaking for 1st year students in FELTE, ULIS, VNU

Question 1: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question

How often do you exploit the following kinds of information gap activities in teaching speaking?

Kinds of activities	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Detecting differences					
Exchanging personal information					
Guessing games					
Jigsaw activities					
Others (please specify)					
.....					

Part 2: The strategies applied by teachers to exploit information gap activities in teaching speaking for 1st year student in FELTE, ULIS, VNU

Question 2: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question?

How do you assign students into pair/group/team in exploiting information gap activities?

Ways	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
According to proximate seat positions					
According to common English ability					

According to students' common points					
At random					
Others (please specify)					

Question 3: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question How do you give instructions to students when exploiting information gap activities in teaching speaking?

Techniques	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Say-do-check (saying the instructions, getting students to do and then checking)					
Show-don't-tell (giving a demonstration)					
Step-by-step (breaking down instructions into small & separate steps)					
Student recall (giving instructions in English then asking students to repeat in Vietnamese)					
Others (please specify)					

Question 4: What do you often do while students are doing their task?(you can choose more than 1 option)

- A. Actively monitor the class
- B. Wander around the class
- C. Sit or stand quietly in the corner to observe the class
- D. Others (please specify):.....
.....

Question 5: In what ways do you deal with students' mistakes? (you can choose >1 option)

- A. Ignoring their mistakes
- B. Encouraging cross check among pairs and groups
- C. Giving correction right after students make mistakes
- D. Taking notes typical mistakes of students and then correcting all at the end of the activities
- E. Others (please specify):

.....

Part 3: The obstacles in using information gap activities as perceived by teachers at English Division 1, ULIS, VNU

Question 6: What obstacles do you encounter in using information gap activities in teaching speaking? (you can choose more than 1 option)

- A. Class layout is not suitable for activities.
- B. I find it hard to design an information gap activity that is suitable for the objectives of the lesson.
- C. It's time-consuming to prepare for a lesson using information gap activities.
- D. Students are too lazy or shy to speak in front of the class.
- E. Students do not cooperate well with each other.
- F. Students' levels are different.
- G. Students use their mother tongue too much.
- H. The class is too noisy to control.
- I. The quality of teaching aids such as cassette and projectors is poor.
- J. Others (please specify):.....

.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

APPENDIX 1B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Hello everyone! My name is Trần Thị Hồng from class QH09E13. I am currently taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi. My graduation paper is titled ***“A study on information gap activities implementation in teaching speaking skills for first year students at Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, ULIS, VNU”***. This survey questionnaire is designed to gather information on the current situation of using information gap activities in teaching speaking for freshmen. Your assistance in completing the following questions is highly appreciated. All of your opinions will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Note:

- **Definition of information gap activity (IGA):** IGA is a practice activity in which two or more students engaged in do not share exactly the same information and they need to talk to each other to complete a task (Thornton, 1987).
- **Kinds of IGA:**
 - ✓ Detecting differences: Two students are given two pictures, which are identical except for several differences. They are required to locate the differences by describing and comparing pictures.
 - ✓ Exchanging personal information: Students ask questions to find out the similarities/differences among them.

- ✓ Guessing game: One student has a picture/sentence/piece of information and the other has to ask questions to guess what it is about.
- ✓ Jigsaw activities: Each student has one of a few pieces of the “puzzle”, and they must cooperate to fit all the pieces into a whole picture.

❖ **General information**

- Class:
- Major:
- Years of studying English:
- Speaking score in semester 1 (10 scale):

Part I: Kinds of information gap activities mostly used by teachers in teaching speaking for 1st year students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU

Question 1: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question How often does your teacher use the following kinds of information gap activities in teaching speaking?

Kinds of activities	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Detecting differences					
Exchanging personal information					
Guessing games					
Jigsaw activities					
Others (please specify)					
.....					

Part 2: The strategies applied by teachers to exploit information gap activities in teaching speaking for 1st student at FELTE, ULIS, VNU

Question 2: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question How do you want your teacher to form the groups in exploiting information gap activities?

Ways	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
According to proximate seat positions					
According to common English ability					
According to students' common points					
At random					
Others (please specify)					

Question 3: Please put a tick (✓) in each column in the table below that answers the question In what ways do you want your teacher to give instructions when exploiting information gap

activities in teaching speaking?

Techniques	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Breaking down instructions into small & separate steps					
Giving a demonstration					
Saying the instructions, getting you to do and then checking					
Giving instructions in English and then asking you to say them again in Vietnamese					
Others (please specify)					
.....					

Question 4: In what ways do you want your teacher to do while you are doing the task? (You can choose more than 1 option)

- A. Actively monitor the class
- B. Wander around the class
- C. Sit or stand quietly in the corner to observe the class
- D. Others (please specify):.....
.....

Question 5: In what ways does your teacher deal with your mistakes? (You can choose more than 1 option)

- A. Ignoring your mistakes
- B. Encouraging cross check among pairs and groups
- C. Giving correction right after you make mistakes
- D. Taking notes your typical mistakes and then correcting all at the end of the activities
- E. Others (please specify):.....
.....

Part 3: The obstacles in using information gap activities as perceived by students at English

Division 1, ULIS, VNU

Question 6: What difficulties do you encounter when joining in information gap activities in teaching speaking? (You can choose more than 1 option)

- A. My partners do not cooperate with me.
- B. I am afraid of being criticized by others when making mistakes.
- C. I am too shy to talk.
- D. I can't understand the instructions.

- E. I lack words/structures to express my ideas.
- F. The class is too noisy.
- G. The task is too difficult for me.
- H. No difficulty at all
- I. Others (please specify):.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

APPENDIX 2A: Questions for in-depth interview

1. What kinds of information gap activities do you often exploit in teaching speaking skills for 1st students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU?
2. What are the benefits of using information gap activities in teaching speaking skills for 1st students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU?
3. Why don't you choose other kinds of information gap activities in teaching speaking skills for 1st students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU?
4. How do you often assign students into pairs/groups/teams when exploiting information gap activities?
5. How do you give instructions to students?
6. How do you monitor the class when they are doing the task? Why?
7. During this process, do you provide any corrective feedback to students?
8. In what ways do you deliver the feedback?
9. What obstacles do you encounter in using information gap activities in teaching speaking skills for 1st students at FELTE, ULIS, VNU?
10. How do you deal with them?

APPENDIX 2B: in-depth interview Transcripts

TEACHER A

Interviewer (I): Thanks so much for your presence. This interview is to clarify what you have chosen in the questionnaire for further analysis. So are you ready now?

Teacher A (A): Of course.

I: Thanks. Firstly, you said that exchanging personal information was regularly used in your speaking lessons, right? So can you give me the reason for that choice?

A: I think exchanging personal information is the best way to increase students' talking time and foster their mutual understanding. You know, students are always fond of telling about themselves, right? Hence, I use this way to motivate them to talk more in a cozy atmosphere. Not to say, this year the course's requirements are very strict; we have to follow all steps on the course guide and that kind of activity is very easy to adapt so why don't we use it more?

I: Oh, I see your point. How about guessing game?

A: In the past, guessing game was the most familiar one used to introduce new lessons, review lessons and evaluate the progress of a class with only undemanding teaching aids such as chalks and cards.

I: Ok, so why don't you use detecting differences and jigsaw activities more?

A: Oh, I only use them to vary the tasks, to let students have new experience. They are rather effective in enhancing students' interaction & collaboration as they are keen on sharing pictures and locating differences. But you know, they are time-consuming to prepare.

I: Yes, so you don't want to use them. Ok. Let's move to the strategies applied in IGA. Here in the questionnaire, you stated that grouping according to proximate seat positions was preferred. Can you explain more?

A: Say, it's very time-saving and convenient, especially for classes with rigid layout. You know, students seating closely are of better mutual understanding so letting them work together can motivate them more.

I: Yes. I also like being grouped by this technique. How about grouping randomly?

A: I usually use this technique by numbering students. Students with the same number will be in one group. Using that technique, I can let them work with different partners, new environment. However, it is time-consuming and unfavorable for timid students.

I: I see, what about the two other techniques? Why do you prefer grouping students according to their common points to common English abilities?

A: Oh, the former one is more effective in encouraging students to exchanging their ideas and sharing opinions than the latter. Both of them can guarantee equal participation among students. You know, there will be the phenomenon of high level and low level groups; I will spend more time on low groups. But these two techniques are very time-consuming and demanding.

I: Thank you. Now, about techniques to deliver instructions, you always use step-by-step technique right? Can you clarify it?

A: Step-by-step technique? Oh, I often give students one instruction at a time, not all lists of instructions all together to help them understand completely, especially when there is lots of information in instructions.

I: Yes, you sometimes use say-do-check and show-don't-tell techniques right? Why do you prefer these techniques to student recall?

A: Oh, firstly, say-do-check technique, I often say the instruction, get students to do it, and then check whether they have done it correctly before going on to the next ones. By this way, I can tell straight away if students hadn't understood something. Next, show-don't-tell - giving a demonstration, right? This technique can motivate students to perform the task as they are really active. As for student recall, it's not welcome in my lesson because students are encouraged to speak in English all the time. Only when the tasks are too complex, I ask them to repeat what they would do in Vietnamese.

I: Thanks. Now we'll move to the next issue. You stated that you only sat or stand quietly in the corner to observe the class, right? Why don't you prefer actively monitoring them?

A: In fact, there are many shy students in my class. They are timid to talk and even some stop talking when seeing me coming towards them. Maybe, they are afraid of being criticized when making mistakes. Hence, the teacher's presence would be an interference. Observing the class from the corner is a better way in this case. Students will speak more and more negotiation of meaning process is performed.

I: How about class control? You let them free all the time?

A: Of course, no. I still keep an eye on them to make sure that they are in task, provided help if necessary.

I: Ok, next, as for students' mistakes during IGA, you chose to encourage crosscheck among groups and correct all the mistakes at the end of the activity, right? Can you give the reason?

A: Yes, I don't want to interfere students' work so I often correct mistakes at the end of the activity. More than that, it's time-consuming to correct all the mistakes made by students. I only figured out major one and encourage them to correct themselves. It's a natural way of learning a new language.

I: Yes, right. And the last thing I want to ask you is about the obstacles you faced during IGA exploitation. You posed out 4 reasons, right? Firstly, it was the class layout. Why do you think so?

A: As the class layout is rigid, it is very difficult to carry out the task that needs much movement. Hence, I only choose simple tasks like guessing game and exchanging personal information.

I: You mean it limits the choice of IGA types, right? Ok, what about the next obstacles?

A: Due to my experience, it is very time-consuming to prepare for an IGA, not to say, the course guide and textbooks are so harsh to adapt.

I: Oh, can you explain more about the procedure you do to prepare for an IGA?

A: Very complicated. I have to think the task, prepare cards, and find ways to lubricate the procedure, etc. For example, last week I had to find out a story matching with the given topic, paraphrase new words if necessary, cut them into small parts, plan the procedure, etc. It was a waste of time indeed.

I: I see what you mean. What about students' habit? It prevented you from exploiting IGA, right?

A: Right. Vietnamese students in general are very shy to talk while in IGA, they are advised to share the information with others. But in fact, they only keep silent. Sometimes, I must make use of marks to force them to talk.

I: It's an insolvable problem. You also had difficulty in students' levels so can you explain more?

A: You know, I often assign students into groups according to their close positions so they are in mixed-ability groups. Naturally, better groups will finish the task first and they start to make noise and disturb others. I find it hard to control them.

I: I see. So can you give me any recommendations for these problems?

A: The only solution to these problems is to vary the task and the ways to perform the task such as group forming techniques. I think students will cooperate more in the task.

I: Yes. That's all I want to know from you. Thank you very much for your contribution.

TEACHER B

Interviewer (I): Thanks so much for your presence. This interview is to clarify what you have chosen in the questionnaire for further analysis. So are you ready now?

Teacher B (B): Yes

I: Thanks. Firstly, you stated that you exploited all kinds of IGA mentioned with a high frequency, especially exchanging personal information, right? So can you explain more?

B: For me, all kinds of IGA are useful in different ranges of adaptability to the course book and students' levels. Exchanging personal information activity is easy to employ owing to its flexibility. Jigsaw activities are helpful to get students to make acquaintance with real life where they have to find out other "puzzles" to complete the "whole pictures". The materials used in that kind of activity are variable such as photos, funny images and stories on the Internet and course books. While detecting differences and guessing games are interesting and effective in increasing students' speaking ability. However, it takes lots of time to adapt these kinds.

I: Thanks so much. Let's move to the strategies applied in IA. Here in the questionnaire, you stated that grouping randomly was preferred. Can you explain more?

B: Well, you know. Grouping students by this way, you can create mixed-ability groups; that means students can learn a lot from their friends. No one will be the dominant. They all involve in the task so I think it's worth exploiting that technique.

I: What about assigning students into groups according to proximate seat positions? You chose a regular use, right?

B: Yes, it's time-saving and convenient to use this technique but it can restrict students' collaboration and interaction so I don't use it much.

I: I see your point. You also preferred a more frequency in grouping students according to common English ability and common points. Why do you choose that?

B: Oh, firstly these techniques can make students more confident and active during the activity instead of being shy. Grouping students according to their ability can create equal participation among them but sometimes hinders the effectiveness of peers' learning as students of low level groups can't help each other much.

I: Oh, in my opinion, weak students are very ashamed of being put in low level groups. How do you think about it?

B: Well, it's not just a serious problem. It's up to you. Try to form groups with same abilities but don't let students know the way you assign them. Of course, there will be no cases like that.

I: Thank you. Now, about techniques to deliver instructions, you often make use of say-check and show-don't-tell techniques right? Can you clarify it?

B: Say-do-check and show-don't-tell? Well, they can create better environment. Using these techniques, students not only understand the rules completely but also are inspired a lot. You know, students are active so they prefer doing something different to passively receiving. I use them more because at the beginning of the semester, I set a rule that there will be no Vietnamese word in speaking lessons. If I hear any words, I will punish them. Student recall is antiscientific as for me. No negotiation of meaning process would be performed if Vietnamese were allowed.

I: Oh, I see. How about step-by-step technique. Do you use it?

B: Of course, I sometimes use it when the tasks are complex and students seem to be confused. You know, breaking down the instruction into small steps, checking for comprehensions after each step are likely to help all students clear the instruction.

I: I agree. Now we'll move to the next issue. You stated that you actively monitored the class during the task right? Why don't you prefer sitting or standing quietly in the corner to observe the class? Is there any problem with this?

A: I think it's easy to understand as moving around the class, I can check whether students are doing what supposed or not. More than that, it can make them concentrate more on the activity; minimize the use of mother tongue as some are afraid of teachers' presence. Once again, "there was no Vietnamese" rule is set in my speaking lesson so I must check whether students obey the rule. When teachers only sit or stand in the corner, students can do everything they want and no task is fully completed at all.

I: Yes. So do you give them any corrective feedback during this process?

B: No, everything is kept in its natural way. I only give them comments and feedback at the end of the task. I don't want to distract them from their talk. I only note down their mistakes and correct the most common ones for the whole class.

I: I agree with you. Now we move to the last question. Do have any problems with IGA exploitation?

B: Well. Everything is good but the rigid class layout. You know, I often form groups according to their common points and English ability, the table setting is rigid so students have to move and move. The time needed for settle down students is considerable. Not to say, when IGA is used as a warm-up activity so I have to think carefully before delivering the task.

A: How about students' use of mother tongue? Many teachers at Division I had difficulty with it. How about you.

B: No difficulty at all. As I mentioned no Vietnamese is accepted in my lesson so I don't have to pay much attention to this.

I: Yes. That's all I want to know from you. Thank you very much for your contribution.

APPENDIX 3: Classroom observation checklist

Part A: General information

- ✓ Class:
- ✓ Teacher:
- ✓ Date:
- ✓ Number of students:
- ✓ Objectives of the lesson:

Part B: Criteria for checklist

Criteria	Notes
I. Kinds of IGA	
- What kind of IGA is used?	
II. Strategies applied	
<i>II.1. Participant organization</i>	
- Ss work in pairs/groups/teams or individuals?	
- Numbers of group	
- Numbers of students in each group	
- Which techniques of forming group applied?	
- How long does it take?	
<i>II.2. Giving instructions</i>	
- Which technique is applied?	
- How long does it take?	
- What are students' attitudes?	
<i>II.3. Teacher's actions</i>	
- What does the teacher do while Ss are doing the task?	
- In what ways does the teacher deal with students' mistakes?	
- Does he/she provide any help?	
- Which technique is used?	
III. Obstacles encountered	
- Is there any problems arising during the activity?	
- How does the teacher overcome them?	

Part C: Assessment of students' involvement

Criteria	Notes
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Do all students actively participate in the activity?	
Do they cooperate with each other?	
Do they use their mother tongue during the activity?	
Do they express their ideas freely or reluctantly?	
Do they make too much noise?	