



THE THINK-PAIR-SHARE TECHNIQUE ON EFL PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

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Abstract:

The Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique is considered an effective collaborative learning strategy for improving students' speaking performance in an EFL context. However, primary school students in rural areas in Vinh Long Province still face many difficulties in using English to express ideas due to limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, lack of confidence, and few opportunities to practice speaking in English classrooms. This study, therefore, aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of TPS and their practices in implementing this technique to support Grade 5 students' speaking performance. A mixed-method approach was conducted, involving 50 teachers of English who completed the questionnaire and 6 teachers who participated in the interviews. The findings showed that teachers had positive perceptions of TPS and believed it improved students' speaking performance. In practice, although teachers frequently applied TPS, they did not always implement all stages consistently because of practical issues like large class size, duration of the lesson, proficiency level of students, and managing the classroom. Thus, the success of TPS was greatly influenced by the flexibility, classroom management abilities, and adjustment of activities to students' needs and classroom conditions. This study confirms the effectiveness of TPS and suggests implications for improving its use in EFL primary school classroom practices.

Keywords: the Think-Pair-Share technique, speaking performance, cooperative language learning

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1. Introduction

Today, English is considered one of the most significant and widely used languages in the world, making it a compulsory subject in many educational systems (Rose *et al.*, 2021). Among the four English skills, speaking plays a vital role in oral communication and meaning exchange (Rao, 2019). According to the 2018 English Curriculum, primary school students are expected to develop all four skills, with particular emphasis on listening and speaking (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2018). However, Grade 5 students at the researcher's school still experience difficulties in English communication, such as shyness, nervousness, lack of confidence, poor pronunciation, and limited opportunities for real-life speaking practice (Nguyen, 2022).

Several factors influence students' speaking performance, including anxiety, limited ideas, low participation, use of the mother tongue, and lack of motivation (Maulani *et al.*, 2019). To address these issues, the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) (Lyman, 1981) has been recognized as a collaborative learning strategy that encourages students to express ideas, practice dialogues, increase engagement, and develop critical thinking skills (Pajrina *et al.*, 2022; Phan & Do, 2021; Raba, 2017). Besides, this technique has not been widely used in Vietnam, particularly in rural public schools (Phan, 2020; Phan & Do, 2021). Therefore, this study investigates EFL primary school teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the use of the TPS to improve students' speaking performance.

The study addresses two research questions:

- 1) What are primary school teachers' perceptions of using the Think-Pair-Share to improve students' speaking performance? and
- 2) How do primary school teachers implement Think-Pair-Share in speaking activities?

2. Literature review

2.1 Speaking and speaking performance

Speaking is considered one of the most important skills for EFL students because it develops their verbal communication ability (Phan, 2020). According to Rao (2019), speaking helps students communicate, express ideas, and interact with others in various contexts. His view implies the role speaking plays in developing students' communicative competence and confidence. In this study, speaking is defined as the ability of young learners to convey their ideas, personal thinking, opinions, and emotions in English in a meaningful way with their peers.

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), the five main elements of speaking performance are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. However, speaking performance is influenced by linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors such as confidence, anxiety level, and topical knowledge (Jezhny & Bapir, 2021). As a result, speaking performance is defined as students' ability to use

pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary in English to produce spoken language fluently and confidently.

Hence, teaching speaking should create opportunities for students' interaction and communication. Vo and Le (2022) point out that speaking tasks should be organized effectively to encourage students to express themselves. As Harmer (2015) observes, many students fear making mistakes and losing face in front of their peers. It is therefore necessary to apply teaching techniques that reduce anxiety and increase student participation in speaking lessons.

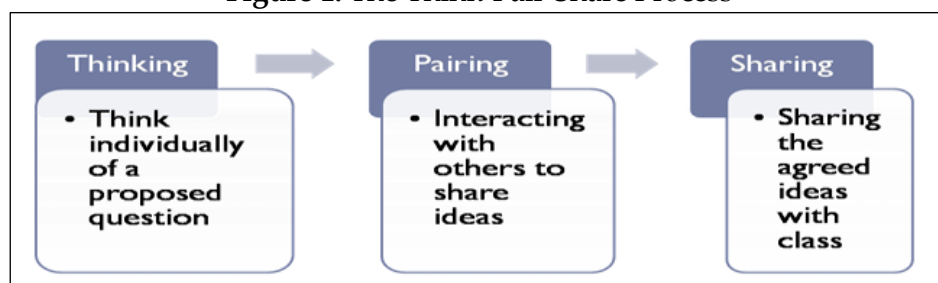
2.2. Primary school students

In the view of Harmer (2015), primary school students are enthusiastic and curious, but they have limited attention spans and learn through interaction and meaningful activities. With these characteristics, one of the most common beliefs about age and language learning is that young children learn faster and more effectively than any other age group. In line with this view, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory states that the learning process mainly occurs through social interaction and cooperation. In addition, Krashen (1982) suggests that low anxiety levels and high learning motivation facilitate language acquisition. Therefore, the TPS technique is suitable for teaching speaking for primary school students because it promotes interaction, maintains attention, and creates a learning environment that enhances students' speaking performance (Harmer, 2015; Pajrina *et al.*, 2022; Raba, 2017).

2.3. The Think-Pair-Share (TPS) technique

The TPS technique was first developed by Frank Lyman in 1981. McTighe and Lyman (1988, p. 19) continuously describe TPS as *"a multi-mode discussion cycle in which students listen to a question or presentation, have time to think individually, talk with each other in pairs, and finally share responses with the larger group."* Nguyen *et al.* (2023) consider the TPS technique as an effective teaching strategy that involves a three-step process involving think, pair discussion, and share. The process of the TPS technique is presented below.

Figure 1: The Think-Pair-Share Process



Source: Adapted from Phan and Do (2021).

Several studies have shown that TPS benefits students in some ways. This practice helps students enhance confidence, participation, interaction, and critical thinking skills (Maulani *et al.*, 2019; Phan & Do, 2021; Al Abri & Al-Mekhlafi, 2024). Moreover, TPS offers

a supportive environment that encourages shy or reluctant students to take an active part in speaking activities. However, TPS has some drawbacks. The technique can be time-consuming, especially when students discuss difficult topics, and classroom discussions may become noisy or off-topic (Vera Figueroa & Vera Maldonado, 2024). Moreover, students may repeat their partners' ideas instead of expressing personal opinions, while stronger students may dominate discussions or refuse to cooperate (Jones & Wiliam, 2021).

2.4. Teachers' perceptions and practices

Perception is the way individuals understand and interpret things based on their feelings and experiences (Lea & Bradbery, 2020). Teachers' perceptions can influence classroom participation, teaching effectiveness, and students' learning performance. As Richards and Schmidt (2013) point out, teaching practices refer to the actual classroom methods, processes, and activities teachers employ when teaching a language. In the context of TPS activities, teachers' practices are reflected in the ways they organize, manage, and support speaking activities in the classroom. Moreover, Borg (2003) argues that teachers' perceptions form the basis of pedagogical decision-making and are closely related to classroom practice. When teachers hold positive perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of TPS, they are more likely to apply the technique intentionally and consistently by designing appropriate speaking activities. Therefore, examining the relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices contributes to clarifying how TPS is implemented in primary school speaking classes and identifying factors influencing the effectiveness of the technique in real classroom settings.

2.5. Theoretical framework

The study is based on communicative language teaching (CLT). The core goal of this approach is developing communicative competence, which includes "*knowing how to use language for a variety of purposes and functions.*", "*knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts.*", and "*knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge.*" (Richards, 2006, p. 3). In addition, CLT emphasizes communication and pair and group work in language learning Richards (2006). To support this approach, Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) argue that CLT emphasizes fluency rather than the correct use of grammar. He considers language learning a creative activity in which students develop their abilities through interaction and sharing of meaning. Hence, it can be seen that the TPS technique with features such as collaborative activities, dialogue, and the exchange of ideas in a friendly environment is absolutely consistent with the principles of CLT.

2.6. Related studies

In the international context, several studies have been conducted on the TPS technique. For example, Maulani *et al.* (2019) apply the quantitative research design with pre-tests and post-tests to examine whether the use of the TPS technique can improve junior high

school students' speaking skills or not in Indonesia. The findings show that students usually face some challenges such as limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and lack of engaging teaching strategies, while TPS increase participation, confidence, and classroom interaction. However, primary school teachers' perceptions and practices, especially in Vietnam, are not addressed in this study. Another study carried out by Pajrina *et al.* (2022) conducted a quasi-experimental study with 40 secondary school students to examine the effectiveness of the TPS technique in improving speaking abilities. The findings indicate that students' speaking performance improved significantly before and after using the TPS technique, with confidence and participation. However, this research primarily concentrated on secondary school students and did not investigate TPS applications in primary schools.

In the Vietnamese context, Phan (2020) used a mixed-methods approach to investigate 24 students in the faculty of tourism at Hai Phong University. The findings revealed that the TPS strategy significantly contributed to students' participation and confidence. However, this study did not focus on teachers' perceptions and practices because they are the ones who directly implement the technique. Similarly, Phan and Do (2021) used a qualitative approach to investigate the use of TPS in students' speaking skills and engagement with 35 students at TUEBA. This study outcome determines this strategy helped them to think critically and establish interactive interest and confidence that are extremely necessary to make a good oral presentation. Nevertheless, this study mainly focuses on university students and did not examine how TPS is practiced at the primary level. Therefore, the study aims to explore these gaps.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

The study used a mixed-methods approach (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012) to explore teachers' perceptions and practices regarding EFL students' speaking performance at 47 primary schools in Vinh Long province by integrating data from questionnaires administered to 50 Grade 5 teachers selected through convenience sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and semi-structured interviews conducted with six teachers through purposive sampling (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012).

3.2. Data collection instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaires

According to Fraenkel *et al.* (2012), questionnaires are the most common approach to data gathering. In this study, the questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended demographic questions, 38 closed-ended questions, and 2 open-ended questions, designed and distributed to teachers in both English and Vietnamese. The questionnaire was adapted from studies by Ma'arif and Ashlihah (2017), Ngu Ming Zhi *et al.* (2025), and Nguyen *et al.* (2021). The questions were (1) teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique, (2) teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance, (3) teachers'

perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms, and (4) teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking. The questions were designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) (Likert, 1932). Reverse-coded items were used in each section of the questionnaire (Barnette, 1997).

3.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews tell us things about how people feel, what they value, and what they believe they do (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed, consisting of eight main questions adapted from previous studies by Phan (2020), Raba (2017) and Sanjani (2015). The interview questions were designed based on four themes: (1) teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique, (2) teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance, (3) teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms, and (4) teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes or longer and was conducted online to increase participants' convenience and comfort (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012).

3.3. Data collection analysis

3.3.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire was delivered to teachers of English teaching fifth grade in Vinh Long province and distributed online via Google Forms. It took from 30 to 45 minutes for participants to complete the questionnaire, and this information was clearly communicated to teachers before participation. The study ensured voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and the ensuring of anonymity and confidentiality of participants' personal information evaluation (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). The collected quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27 with descriptive statistics, including the 4 themes mentioned above. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess for consistency, while the mean and standard deviation were used in this study (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012).

3.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

The interviewees were completely voluntary teachers of English who had completed the questionnaires, and 6 teachers were officially invited to the interviews. The interviews were conducted by using phone calls on the Zalo application, based on the convenience and availability of each interviewee. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted in Vietnamese to help teachers express their opinions as naturally, fully, and accurately as possible (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). Interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and all personal information was kept confidential, and data were only used for academic purposes (Fraenkel *et al.*, 2012). After that, the interview data were transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The responses were coded, categorized and grouped into the four main themes mentioned above.

3.4. Ethical considerations

According to Fraenkel *et al.* (2012), ethical considerations are to be used throughout the research, whether during planning, data collection, and analysis or in the final report. In this study, the main ethical issues were informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. The teachers were informed of the purpose of the study, the methodology, the use of observation and interview tools, and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as the right to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), while the data were kept in a locked cabinet.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Questionnaires findings

To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was employed in this study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics of Questionnaire Items

	N of items	Cronbach's alpha
Questionnaire items	38	0.830
Items of teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique	7	0.711
Items of teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance	16	0.822
Items of teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms.	5	0.789
Items of teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking	8	0.705

Source: Data analysis.

4.1.1. Teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique

A Descriptive Statistics Test was run to examine teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique	50	2.57	5.00	3.93	0.50

Source: Data analysis.

Table 2 shows that teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique were positive ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.50$). Specifically, the mean score for teachers' perceptions of TPS was at a high level of agreement on the five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932).

4.1.2. Teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance

A descriptive statistics test was run to examine each item in the second cluster of the study to identify the overall tendencies of teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance. Table 3 shows the results of the test, such as minimum score, maximum score, mean score, and standard deviation.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Test of teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance	50	3.00	4.93	3.85	0.43

Source: Data analysis.

Table 3 shows that the mean score of teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance was relatively high ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.43$). Based on the responses of 50 teachers, the results indicate that the scores ranged from 3.00 to 4.93.

4.1.3. Teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms

A descriptive statistics test was employed to examine teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms	50	1.60	4.80	3.34	0.70

Source: Data analysis.

Table 4 shows that teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms were measured with $N = 50$. The table shows that the overall mean of the scale is $M = 3.34$, with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.70$, indicating a certain degree of difference in teachers' responses. Based on the result, teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classroom were rated as average.

4.1.4. Teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking

A descriptive statistics test was applied to analyze teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking by examining the overall trends of the data.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking	50	2.88	4.75	3.76	0.45

Source: Data analysis.

Table 5 shows that the mean value of teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking was 3.76, with a standard deviation of 0.45. According to a five-point Likert scale, this average mean score was considered relatively high. The results implied that teachers tend to frequently apply the TPS technique in their teaching of speaking.

4.2. Interview findings

4.2.1. Teachers' perceptions of the TPS technique

Interview data indicate that all six teachers applied the TPS technique in speaking lessons. The teachers learned the technique through professional training or colleague observation. All teachers reported positive impressions, stating that students became more enthusiastic, active, and confident in speaking activities. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"The students were enthusiastic about discussing and sharing ideas with their friends."
(Teacher 2, interview extract)

"My first impression is that the students are more enthusiastic and active." (Teacher 3, interview extract)

"My students seem more confident and proactive when speaking." (Teacher 4, interview extract)

Six teachers agreed that TPS improved students' confidence, fluency, collaboration, and classroom interaction while creating a supportive learning environment. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"...but after applying it in a few lessons, they spoke more spontaneously and confidently."
(Teacher 1, interview extract)

"It provides a safe environment before students practice speaking with their classmates."
(Teacher 2, interview extract)

"The students practiced fluently and enthusiastically during the lesson." (Teacher 5, interview extract)

"Furthermore, it will foster a sense of cooperation and teamwork among students, encouraging them to help each other." (Teacher 6, interview extract)

4.2.2. Teachers' perceptions of the effects of TPS on students' speaking performance

When asked about students' reactions when implementing the TPS technique, the six teachers shared what they observed during their teaching process. Initially, some students were confused, hesitant, or shy about speaking because they were not used to this learning technique. However, after receiving clear instructions from teachers and participating in several practice sessions, students gradually became more engaged, active, and interested in the activities. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"After I explained it... they became very interested... they easily understood and enthusiastically discussed it with friends." (Teacher 1, interview extract)

"Instead of just a few students raising their hands like before, almost the entire class participated. Therefore, the classroom became lively and energetic." (Teacher 5, interview extract)

When asked if the TPS technique has improved students' speaking performance, all six teachers agreed that TPS played a significant role in supporting students' speaking development. TPS improves students' confidence, fluency, idea expression, vocabulary, collaboration and communication skills. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"I think that students have improved in all aspects... and their confidence has increased." (Teacher 1, interview extract)

"In my opinion... The next is fluency." (Teacher 2, interview extract)

"I think some aspects will be improved, like rich vocabulary." (Teacher 3, interview extract)

"They will listen, respond, and learn from each other." (Teacher 5, interview extract)

4.2.3. Teachers' perceptions of barriers to implementing TPS in their classrooms

When asked about barriers to implementing TPS in the classroom, all six teachers reported that several barriers still exist in Grade 5 speaking classes. These difficulties included students' uneven English proficiency, limited vocabulary, shyness, large class size, and limited lesson time. The following extracts demonstrate teachers' views.

"First, students' levels are uneven so they are hesitant to participate in pairs." (Teacher 1, interview extract)

"Some students are too shy." (Teacher 2, interview extract)

"If they encounter difficult problems like new vocabulary or challenging topics, they often use Vietnamese." (Teacher 4, interview extract)

"There are only 35 minutes in a period... the teacher can't possibly support all the pairs in a large class." (Teacher 6, interview extract)

To overcome these barriers, the teachers suggested several solutions, such as providing pre-teaching vocabulary, language support, pairing stronger students with

weaker ones, encouraging shy students, managing time, and adjusting TPS procedures flexibly according to classroom conditions. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"Before a speaking lesson, I have to teach the vocabulary related to that lesson, then guide and support." (Teacher 4, interview extract)

"For shy students, encourage them to speak. First, I lower the expectations a bit." (Teacher 2, interview extract)

"I use the TPS technique for pair work when the stronger students can support the weaker ones." (Teacher 4, interview extract)

"I limited the time for each step of TPS and used a countdown timer...I rearranged the steps, so it was not always strictly Think-Pair-Share." (Teacher 6, interview extract)

3.2.4. Teachers' practices of using TPS in teaching speaking

To implement the TPS technique effectively, six teachers reported using various classroom strategies related to organizing activities, giving instructions, and allocating time. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"In the Think stage, I allow students 1 to 2 minutes to think individually and write down their thoughts on paper." (Teacher 1, interview extract)

"Yes. I clearly explained the goal of the activity... I use a countdown timer to announce to students when moving to the next step." (Teacher 2, interview extract)

"At first, I separated each step of TPS for students to be easy to understand." (Teacher 5, interview extract)

When asked about their use of TPS in teaching speaking, six teachers reported applying the technique through activities such as brainstorming, debate, role-plays, class discussions, problem-solving, and storytelling. They also used TPS at different lesson stages, especially during practice and employed it as a formative assessment tool to monitor students' speaking performance. The following extracts illustrate their views.

"I used this technique to assess students and take notes on other skills. It also supports evaluating students when they complete their end-of-year assessment." (Teacher 3, interview extract)

"In my lessons, I use TPS for the practice or production stage." (Teacher 5, interview extract)

"I often use activities such as role-play, and sharing about familiar topics and encourage students to make short and funny stories." (Teacher 6, interview extract)

4.4. Discussion

Research Question One: What are primary school teachers' perceptions of using the Think-Pair-Share technique in students' speaking performance?

To begin with, the findings demonstrate that teachers had positive perceptions of the TPS technique. Questionnaire and interview data reveal that teachers believed TPS helped students become more active, confident, and engaged in speaking activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Maulani *et al.* (2019) and Phan (2020), which reported that TPS increases student engagement and confidence. This may be explained by the collaborative nature of TPS, which allows students to prepare ideas before speaking. The finding is also consistent with communicative language teaching principles, emphasizing interaction and pair work in developing communicative competence (Richards, 2006).

Next, teachers believed that TPS positively improved students' speaking performance, particularly confidence, fluency, vocabulary use, and idea expression. Interview data show that students became less anxious, spoke more coherently, and participated more actively after pair discussions. These findings support previous studies by Phan (2020) and Maulani *et al.* (2019) and align with Harmer's (2015) view that psychological factors such as anxiety and confidence strongly influence speaking performance. The teacher also noted that TPS created a supportive and interactive classroom environment, which is in line with communicative language teaching principles (Richards, 2006).

However, teachers also identified several barriers to implementing TPS in speaking classes. The main challenges include large class sizes, classroom noise, limited lesson time, uneven English proficiency, limited vocabulary, and students' shyness. Some teachers also found it difficult to manage pair discussions and monitor all students effectively. These findings are similar to studies by Raba (2017) and Figueroa and Maldonado (2024), which highlighted classroom management difficulties and unequal student participation in TPS activities. In addition, weaker students often struggled to express ideas, while stronger students tended to dominate discussions. These difficulties may result from both linguistic and non-linguistic factors influencing speaking performance, such as vocabulary limitations, confidence, and anxiety levels (Jezhny & Bapir, 2021). Teachers reported that TPS could be time-consuming, especially in large classes or lessons with complex content, which supports the findings of Figueroa and Maldonado (2024).

Research Question Two: How do primary school teachers practice the Think-Pair-Share technique in speaking activities?

The questionnaire findings show that teachers played an active role in supporting and coordinating TPS activities like observing, assigning roles, and giving feedback to

students. Most interviewed teachers reported that they frequently moved around the classroom to monitor, support pronunciation, encourage students, and clearly explain the steps of TPS. This finding fits with Richards' (2006) perspective on communicative teaching (CLT), where teachers act as guides and facilitators. Teachers' positive practices can be explained by their recognizing that teaching speaking requires both linguistic knowledge, confidence, and a supportive environment (Harmer, 2015), particularly for primary students who need regular guidance and encouragement.

The interview findings show that teachers used various types of TPS activities, such as brainstorming, role-play, debate, creative storytelling, and conversational practice, which were appropriate with the lesson content. The result is in line with Richards (2006) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), who argue that CLT promotes student interaction, pair work and meaningful communication in language learning. The activities of TPS also differ because of the perspective of Vo and Le (2022) that speaking tasks have to be arranged in the right way so that there is an opportunity for students to express themselves and to communicate with others. Further, the findings align with Harmer's (2015) views that meaningful and interactive activities are the most effective ways by which children in primary school. It is possible to explain this result by the characteristics of TPS as a collaborative and flexible technique which enables teachers to adapt speaking activities to students' needs, lesson goals, and classroom contexts. Students were encouraged to engage more actively in communication through activities, such as role play, storytelling and discussion, where they shared their ideas with others, spoke naturally and participated in communication.

The questionnaire findings reveal that teachers' application of TPS was not completely consistent across all stages, typically lacking time for students to evaluate the effectiveness of pair work at the end of the lesson. Some teachers reported that due to time-constrained and large class sizes, they often flexibly shorten or adjust the duration of TPS stages while increasing guidance and support for weak or shy students. These findings concur with Vera Figueroa and Vera Maldonado (2024), who argue that TPS may be time constraints and difficult to manage effectively in large classrooms. While teachers' scores for TPS practices ($M = 3.76$) were relatively high, they were affected by practical classroom conditions like the time of lessons, the number of students in a class, and the differences in students' learning. The result also gives support to Borg's (2003) argument that the teachers' perception is highly correlated with how they practice and make pedagogical decisions in their classrooms.

5. Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

The study examined EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the use of the TPS technique to improve students' speaking performance in rural public primary schools in Vinh Long province. The findings reveal that teachers held positive perceptions of the TPS technique, particularly its effectiveness in enhancing students' confidence, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and idea expression. In practice, teachers regularly used TPS

at different lesson stages while acting as guides, monitors, and supporters during student interaction. However, the implementation of TPS was influenced by challenges such as large class sizes, limited lesson time, students' proficiency level, and classroom management. Therefore, the success of TPS depended greatly on teachers' flexibility, classroom management skills, and ability to adapt activities to students' needs and classroom conditions. The study confirmed that TPS is a suitable and potentially effective technique for developing students' speaking performance.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the scope of the study is relatively limited, so the findings may not fully represent other contexts, particularly urban areas or higher educational levels. Second, the questionnaire and interview data mainly rely on teachers' self-reports. Moreover, the study focuses only on teachers' perceptions and practices without investigating students' perceptions or directly measuring students' speaking performance.

This study serves as a starting point in investigating the application of the TPS technique to improve primary school students' speaking performance in rural EFL contexts. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of TPS implementation could be enhanced through workshops, seminars, peer observation, and experience sharing among teachers. In addition, teachers should adjust activity organization and provide more individual support to ensure participation in large classes. Future studies are recommended to expand the research scope and context and use specific assessment tools to examine the impact of TPS on students' speaking performance more directly.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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