

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
HANOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL VIETTESOL CONFERENCE

**TRANSFORMING
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION
IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION PUBLISHING HOUSE

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We acknowledge the contributions of the invited speakers, the session chairpersons, poster session organizers, and particularly the presenters and participants to this conference.

We wish to thank the contributors to this proceeding for providing their manuscripts in a timely manner and, when required, for responding quickly to our comments. In order to produce this proceeding in advance of the conference itself, we were bound by tight deadlines. We have tried to apply, wherever possible, a minimum set of standards to all manuscripts, with regard to the quality of English and the technical merit of the papers reported therein. While not all papers have received rigorous editing and the process falls short of peer review, we feel the priority to publish the material on its own merit.

We would also like to express our deep gratitude to the Conference Organising Committee who have extended tremendous amount of time and energy to make this event possible. It is certain that this Conference would not have been possible without their full commitment and dedication. They all greatly deserve our recognition. Our sincere appreciation also goes to British Council Vietnam, the Australian Embassy, the US embassy, CENGAGE Learning, and for their academic and financial support.

With much appreciation and excitement, we would like to bring to you the second VietTESOL conference. We hope you enjoy it and will continue to support our conference in the future.

Thank you very much!

On behalf of the Conference Organizing Committee

Prof.Dr. Nguyen Van Minh, President, Hanoi National University of Education

Dr. Vu Thi Tu Anh, Deputy Executive Director, The National Foreign Languages 2020 Project

WELCOME ADDRESS

Prof.Dr. Nguyen Van Minh

President, Hanoi National University of Education

Distinguished guests, honorable speakers, esteemed VietTESOL presenters, and English language teaching professionals,

First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all of you to the second VietTESOL international conference here at Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE).

Today, we are here to meet each other at a time of the best weather of the year in Hanoi. I am very happy to see you again, and even happier to see so many new faces at this second VietTESOL Conference. That's why we may hope for really good results, not only for the conference but also for the connections in the future.

For over 60 years now, HNUE has been a popular destination of teacher training and scientific research, of which teachers of English play an important part. Also, HNUE has been recognized as a regional foreign language institution to address teacher development needs and language teaching quality throughout the country by realizing the initiatives of the National Foreign Language 2020 Project.

HNUE realizes the importance of teacher development in building up language teachers' capacity in English language teaching. One of the most significant tasks is to hold conferences as places for teachers of English to share experiences and learn from one another to strengthen their capacity in teaching and conducting research.

In response to the postmodern globalization era characterized by porous geographical boundaries allowing ideas, people, goods and services to move rapidly across borders, many workshops and conferences in different parts of the world have helped develop strategies so as to meet the demands of globalization. While international awareness, intercultural communication skills, and open-mindedness lie at the heart of the goals of our language education, different practices for these goals to be achieved have been implemented. Some educational contexts mandate the teaching of English to all non-English speaking background students, while others emphasize the incorporation of issues of cultural diversification into all aspects of the curriculum. Our gathering today is for us to share our experiences and ideas in order to innovate our views and teaching practices in the era of globalization.

Via workshops presented by leading scholars in the field, the Conference is to enhance Vietnamese teachers' capacity in English language education and research in Vietnam's English teaching and learning context. We do hope that via this Conference, a professional forum for Vietnamese and international TESOLers can be created to exchange experiences and develop ideas for possible research on innovative practices and problem-solving strategies in the field of English language teaching within and beyond Vietnam.

A quick glance at the topics of the Conference tells me that you are having a full plate before you to unravel the Conference meaning and implications. I wish you success in your gathering. May this be more than your usual academic conference. May it be an occasion as well to build on lasting friendship from which research and other forms of professional development will flourish and be sustained.

On behalf of the Conference Organizing Committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation of the kind supports of the Ministry of Education and Training, the National Foreign Language 2020 Project, the British Council, the US Embassy, the Australian Government, National Geographic Learning, and Cengage Learning.

Make Hanoi your home away from home, enjoy your time in Hanoi, and learn from the Conference itself as well as from the people you meet.

I wish you a fruitful conference and may we proceed with passion!

Thank you!

WELCOME ADDRESS

Dr. Vu Thi Tu Anh

Deputy Executive Director of the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project

Distinguished speakers, honorable guests, keynote speakers, esteemed VietTESOL presenters, moderators, and ELT professionals.

I would like to extend the warmest welcome to all of you attending the second VietTESOL International Conference “**TRANSFORMING ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION**” here in Hanoi.

Envisioned as a biennial scientific conference, the second VietTESOL aims to provide a platform for local and foreign experts, lecturers, teachers, educators, graduate students and senior students to exchange expertise and experience, to share achievements and research outputs, to update current trends, and to enhance future developments of ELT learning and teaching.

The National Foreign Language 2020 Project (NFL 2020) was approved in 2008 under the Decision 1400-QĐ-TTg to promote foreign language learning and teaching in the national system in the period of 2008 – 2020 with a special focus on the expansion of English language learning and teaching in Vietnam in response to the globalization and international integration context. The NFL 2020 has been implemented throughout across Vietnam and has accomplished considerable achievements corresponding to the seven objectives.

Along with the NFL 2020’s activities to realize these objectives, the second VietTESOL international conference is to create a network for English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals across and beyond Vietnam to exchange their teaching practices, experiences and their outstanding research ideas.

For the success of the NFL 2020, the Conference raises and addresses such questions as: What are the needs and wants of ELT professionals? To what extent are ELT professionals’ responsibilities? What is the NFL 2020 project expected to do? In what ways can national and international organizations support this program? More specifically, the Conference seeks for an understanding of Vietnamese ELT professionals’ needs and expectations for their teaching endeavors and to which extent the NFL 2020 project can be responsive.

Participants and presenters of this Conference include teachers of English at primary, secondary, and high school levels from all parts of Vietnam; lecturers from universities and colleges; interested educators and researchers in the field of English language education; administrators of English language schools and universities; senior officials and

representatives of the Ministry of Education and Training, departments of education and training and other institutions; representatives of the British Council, the Australian Embassy, the U.S. Embassy, Cengage Learning, etc.

The Conference has assembled a wide assortment of workshops, paper and poster presentations on the teaching and learning of English ranging from primary to tertiary levels, which evolves around a variety of inspiring, enriching, and innovative issues. The sub-themes of this year's Conference include: Media and technology in English language teaching and learning, Contemporary issues in English language teaching and learning, Cultural issues in English language teaching and learning, and Professional development, which, I strongly believe, are of great value to those involved in ELT across Vietnam and across the globe.

It is my hope that critical rethinking and lively discussions of these issues will be beneficial to ELT practitioners in their daily attempts to help their students learn and love the language. More importantly, it would provide practical implications to the Government, the Ministry of Education and Training, and authorities in terms of policy making for the sustainable development of English language education and research in Vietnam's contemporary context.

Acknowledgment must be given to Hanoi National University of Education for hosting this Conference and to the British Council, the US Embassy, Australia Government, National Geographic Learning, and Cengage Learning for encouraging and supporting this event. The same appreciation goes to all the Conference speakers and participants whose distinguished contributions really make the spirits and important meaning for the Conference.

The second VietTESOL strives to truly be a significant event that can share benefits with other regional and international TESOL organizations in the near future.

After an active and fruitful working day, the VietTESOL 2015 has enriched and inspired all participants. The second VietTESOL ends with a promise to honorably welcome again all scholars, experts, educators, students and participants to the third international Conference VietTESOL 2016.

Thank you!

GOALS

The 2nd International VietTESOL Conference aims to:

1. enhance Vietnamese teachers' capabilities of skills in English language education and research in the Vietnamese educational context, which serves the mission of preparing Vietnam for a more effective process of globalization;
2. create a professional forum for Vietnamese and international TESOL practitioners to exchange experiences and develop ideas for research on innovative practices in the field of ELT in Vietnam and around the world;
3. promote contextual and cultural understanding for more productive exchange of ideas and innovations among ELT professionals;
4. achieve the Vietnam National Foreign Languages Project 2020's aims for the academic year 2015 – 2016 with an emphasis on the innovation of curricula, testing and assessment nationwide.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Keynote Speaker 1: Thomas Lloyd - Deputy Director, English for Education Systems - East Asia, British Council

Thomas Lloyd has been involved in English language teaching since 2002 and has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer and project manager in the UK, India and Brazil in a variety of well-known public and private institutions before moving to take up his current post in the East Asian Regional Team of the British Council. Through this role, Thomas has had the opportunity to advise national and local governments on their English language education strategy as well as sit on project boards for large scale projects across Asia. Besides his extensive experience as a teacher, teacher educator and project manager in ELT, Thomas also has a good academic understanding of ELT through his MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck, University of London and his responsibilities as a peer reviewer for an international journal on bilingualism and bilingual education. Thomas is also a published author on excellence in English language.



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Keynote speaker 2: Diana Dudzik, PhD

Diana Dudzik, PhD, is an international English education consultant living in Minnesota, USA. She received her PhD in Education, Curriculum and Instruction: Second Languages and Cultures Education from the University of Minnesota. Diana has taught ESL at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels in the US, and has written curriculum, evaluated programs, and trained teachers in Vietnam. She has conducted international research in Vietnam and Djibouti, East Africa. Recently, she has worked with Djibouti's Ministry of Education



to develop a localized English textbook and equip teachers to use the new textbook, and she is currently working on a curriculum development project in Laos. Diana lived in Vietnam for more than seven years, beginning in 1994-95 when she taught English to MOET staff, and 2001-04, when she conducted teacher development at Hanoi University (both with Resource Exchange International). From 2010 to 2013 she was a US State Department-sponsored Senior English Language Fellow at ULIS/VNU and the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. Diana was a key author in the development of Vietnam's English Teacher Competencies Framework. She received an award for her great contribution to the English language education in Vietnam from the Minister of Education in 2013.

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SUB-THEME

COMTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

TEACHERS' EVALUATION OF PRIMARY ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS FOR VIETNAMESE SCHOOLS DEVELOPED UNDER THE NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE 2020 PROJECT: A PRELIMINARY INTERNAL¹ SURVEY

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Abstract

The aim of this survey research is to get evaluative feedback from the teachers who are using the primary English textbooks developed under the National Foreign Language 2020 Project to find out their strengths and weaknesses so that further corrections and revisions will be made to perfect the materials before putting them into use on a large scale. Overall, the results of the research have shown that teachers' evaluations of the textbooks are very positive. There are, however, some things that need to be done to improve the quality of the materials. The research consists of 4 parts. Part 1 provides a brief overview of Tiếng Anh 3 and Tiếng Anh 4 – the two English textbooks which are being piloted in 92 selected primary schools throughout Vietnam. Part 2 is concerned with the design of the research which consists of aim of the research, sites and subjects of the research, research instrument, the questionnaire, research procedure, and method of data analysis. Part 3 presents in some detail research findings and discussion of those findings. Part 4 provides a résumé of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks as seen from the point of view of the teachers' evaluations, points out some limitations of the research and makes some suggestions and recommendation for further study.

Keywords: teachers' evaluation, preliminary internal survey, National Foreign Language 2020 Project, three pilot English curricula for Vietnamese schools.

¹ The adjective “internal” in the nominal group “a preliminary internal survey” needs some clarification. Normally, in the Vietnamese textbook development tradition, textbook evaluation is done by some external evaluation body appointed by MOET. But while waiting for this work to be done, it is found necessary to carry out an internal survey (i.e. a survey conducted by the publishers and the textbook authors) to get feedback from the teachers who are piloting the textbooks so that further improvements will be made to perfect the materials.

² The author would like to express his sincere thanks to Hanoi Education Investment and Development (HEID) Company of Viet Nam National Publishing House (VEPH) for allowing him to use the survey data to complete this article.

Introduction

In the National Foreign Language 2020 Project, English curriculum design and textbook development for Vietnamese schools have a legal and academic status. In implementing the Vietnamese Prime Minister's Decision 1400/QĐ-TTg on the approval of the national project entitled "Teaching and learning a foreign language in the national education system, Period 2008-2020" (2008), three pilot English curricula for Vietnamese schools were designed and promulgated by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET): *Chương trình tiếng Anh thí điểm tiểu học* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Primary Schools) (2010), *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học cơ sở* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Lower Secondary Schools) (2012a), *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học phổ thông* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Upper Secondary Schools) (2012b) (for more details, please see Hoang Van Van, 2010, 2011, 2015). In late 2010, the MOET assigned Vietnam Educational Publishing House (VEPH) with the task of organizing the development and production of the ten-year English textbook series for Vietnamese Schools (from grade 3 to grade 12) in collaboration with two world leading publishers – MacMillan Education and Pearson Education. To implement the task of textbook writing, MOET appointed a chief series author, chief grade authors, and authors for each grade. With regard to primary English textbooks, Vietnamese authors in collaboration with native English authors of MacMillan Education have completed writing *Tiếng Anh 3* (English 3) and *Tiếng Anh 4* (English 4) (each includes 2 Student's Books, a Teacher Book, 2 Workbooks, and 2 CDs). After the textbooks were written, MOET designated 92 primary schools which have qualified English teachers to try them out. After two years of trialing *Tiếng Anh 3* and one year of trialing *Tiếng Anh 4*, it was found necessary to conduct a survey research to get feedback from the teachers who are using the textbooks so that further corrections and revisions will be made to improve the quality of the materials before putting them into use on a large scale.

This research consists of 4 parts. Part 1 provides a brief overview of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4*. Part 2 is concerned with the design of the research which consists of aim of the research, sites and subjects of the research, research instrument, contents of the questionnaire, research procedure, and method of data analysis. Part 3 presents in some detail research findings and discussion of those findings. Part 4 provides a résumé of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks as seen from the point of view of the teachers' evaluations, points out some limitations of the research and makes some suggestions and recommendations for further study.

An Overview of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4*

It should be stressed that the development of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* is curriculum-governed in terms of both contents and time allocation. According to MOET's *Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Primary Schools*, the total time frame allocated for primary English is 420 periods, which is broken down into 140 periods for each grade. In terms of constituent parts, each set of the primary textbook for each grade consists of 2 Student's Books, a Teacher's book, 2 Work books and 2 CDs. In terms of structure, each primary English textbook is organized into 20 units and 4 reviews; each unit includes three lessons (Lesson 1, Lesson 2, and Lesson 3); each lesson consists of 2 periods; and each period lasts for 35 minutes. In terms of content, a unit is organized around five components: topic, competences, sentence patterns, vocabulary, and phonics. These components are integrated in the headings/sections of the three lessons such as *Look, listen and repeat*; *Point and say*; *Let's talk*; *Listen and number*; *Read and complete*; *Let's write*; *Listen and repeat*; *Listen and write*; *Let's chant*; *Read and match*; *Read and write*; and *Project*. Each section contains various communicative activities and preparatory communicative activities such as exercise, dialogue, song, chant, crosswords, etc., which require individual work, pair work, group work, and class discussion with various interactive patterns such as student ↔ student, student ↔ teacher, etc. (for details, see Hoang Van Van, 2015).

Research Design

1. Aim of the Research

As mentioned above, this survey aims to get evaluative feedback from primary English teachers who are piloting *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* so that further revisions and corrections will be made to improve the textbooks before putting them into use on a large scale. In addition, the teachers' information about the textbooks will be taken into consideration and will be used as a basis for the authors to write *Tiếng Anh 5*.

2. Sites and Subjects of the Research

The intended research sites are 92 primary schools which are piloting *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4*. These schools are located in different parts of Vietnam: Northern, Central, and Southern, of which 62 schools are in the North, 8 in the Central, and 22 in the South. They are the primary schools which have met the requirements of a national level standard school: they have good physical and teaching and learning facilities such as standard classrooms, a standard library, sufficient CD players, computers, etc., the average number of students per class is 35; and, more importantly, all the English teachers have received Level 4 (equivalent to level CEFR B2) certificate.

The subjects of the survey are the teachers who are piloting *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* in these 92 primary schools.

3. Research Instrument

To accomplish the aim as set above, a questionnaire was developed as research instrument. The reason for choosing questionnaire is that of all the research instruments, questionnaire is the most commonly used format (cf. Trochin, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007); it is the least expensive which can be sent to a large number of respondents and can allow easy and quick data collection (Robinson, 1991; Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2007).

4. The Questionnaire

Different researchers have different views on textbook evaluation. There are researchers who focus on evaluating the physical features of the textbook such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics, the method, objective and approach of the author(s), the teachability and learnability of the textbook, and whether the textbook fits the needs of the students and the school (cf. Williams, 1983; Sheldon, 1988; Brown, 1995). There are researchers who propose to develop a set of criteria focusing on assessing the aim and objectives of the textbook, the themes/topics of the textbook, the vocabulary and grammatical structures of the textbook, and the make-up of the textbook (cf. Skierso, 1991). There are researchers who suggest focusing on assessing the content areas of the textbook such as teaching goals, the depth and breadth of the textbook, and other supplementary components of the textbook (cf. Garinger, 2001). There are even researchers who tend to assess the textbook using as many categories as possible such as course package (including make-up of coursebook page and organization of coursebooks), language content (including language form and language use, grammar, vocabulary, phonology, discourse, style and appropriacy, varieties of English), syllabus base, skills (including listening, speaking, reading, writing) topic, subject content and social values, methodology, teacher's book, and other practical considerations (cf. Cummingsworth, 1995).

As mentioned, for the purpose of this study, a questionnaire is developed to ask primary English teachers who are classroom practitioners; it is not intended to ask specialists or educational administrators. As with Cummingsworth (1995), this questionnaire is developed to explore as many aspects of the two sets of textbooks as possible. It consists of 52 items (criteria) which fall into four major categories as follows:

A. General Issues consisting of 17 items asks teachers to evaluate the structure of the textbooks (item 1), the Project section and its usefulness (items 2, 3, 4), the Review unit

and its usefulness, the story in each Review unit and its appropriateness (items 5, 6, 7, 8), the diversity and usefulness of the recycling some topics of *English 3* in *English 4* (items 9, 10), the combination of linguistic knowledge and communicative skills and the ability to integrate the contents of other primary subjects into the English textbooks, the ability to promote the activity and creativity of the pupil (items 11, 12, 13), the extent to reflect in the textbooks the cultural values of Vietnam, of South-East Asian countries and of some English-speaking countries, and the teachability of the textbooks (items 14, 15), the appropriateness of the price of the Student's Book and Workbook to the average income of the pupils' parents and the appropriateness of the price of the Teacher's Book to the average income of the teachers (items 16, 17).

B. Book Contents consisting of 23 items asks teachers to evaluate the quality of the textbooks in two main areas: Language (phonics, vocabulary, grammar) and Skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Phonics consisting of 4 items (18, 19, 20, 21) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the number of sounds introduced in each unit, the appropriateness of taking the sounds from the words and phrases of the unit for practice, the appropriateness of practicing the sounds in context, and the appropriateness of consolidating the pronunciation of the sounds through chants and songs.

Vocabulary consisting of 3 items (22, 23, and 24) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of introducing the number of new words in each unit of the textbooks, the appropriateness of practicing new words in context, and the appropriateness of consolidating the learning of the new words through chants and songs.

Grammar consisting of 4 items (25, 26, 27, 28) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the number of grammatical structures being introduced in each unit of the textbooks, the appropriateness of practising grammatical structure in context, and the appropriateness of grammatical structures being consolidated through chants and songs.

Listening consisting of 3 items (29, 30, 31) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the listening texts, the diversity and relevance of the listening activities, and the appropriateness of the listening activities being practised in context.

Speaking consisting of 3 items (32, 33, 34) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the speaking topics, the logic of the speaking activities (from easy to difficult), and the diversification of the speaking activities in the textbooks.

Reading consisting of 3 items (35, 36, and 37) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the reading texts to the units of the textbooks, the diversity and richness of the reading texts, and the length, difficulty, and complexity of the reading texts.

Writing consisting of 3 items (38, 39, and 40) asks teachers to evaluate the appropriateness of the writing contents to the topic of the unit, the diversity of the writing

text types and writing skills, and the ability of the textbooks to help pupils to use their knowledge and personal experience to write effectively.

C. Physical Features of the Textbooks consisting of 4 items (41, 42, 43, and 44) asks teachers to evaluate physical features of the textbooks such as color, layout, font size, the Vocabulary section with Vietnamese equivalents at the end of the Student's Book, and printing quality of the textbooks.

D. Components Accompanying Student's Book consisting of 8 items asks teachers to evaluate the quality and usability of the audio CDs (items 45, 46), the quality and quantity of flashcards and large-sized pictures (items 47, 48), the quality and suggesting abilities of Teacher's Book (items 49, 50), and the ability to consolidate, support and expand linguistic knowledge and communication skills of Workbooks (items 51, 52).

To facilitate the teachers' evaluation process, the questionnaire is presented in a Likert-type scale – in this case a five-point scale: **excellent, very good, good, not very good, not good**. The items are designed in an open way so that the respondents may perform the evaluation with ease. To ensure the reliability, the questionnaire was carefully pretested.

5. Survey Procedure

Before sending the questionnaire to the schools, VEPH contacted the district departments of education where the schools are located to state the aim of the survey and ask for permission to carry out the survey. After receiving consent from those district departments of education, the survey team contacted the school principals (by phone or email) to ask for permission to proceed the survey.

Soft copies of the questionnaire were sent to the schools via email, and then hard copies were sent to them via post. During the evaluation process, the respondents could communicate directly with the survey team to receive detailed instructions to ensure that all the items in the questionnaire were fully and accurately evaluated.

The questionnaire was written in Vietnamese (in this report it is translated into English) to make sure that all the items in the questionnaire were equally understood. Also, to encourage more schools and teachers to take part in the survey and to return the questionnaires on time, each respondent taking part in the survey was awarded a small gift.

6. Methods of Data Analysis

Data was quantitatively calculated using Microsoft Excel for statistics and was converted into percentages from overall average percentage of 52 items to average percentage of 4 main categories as described in Section 2.5, and to percentage of each item. For convenience of presentation and observation, except for the overall evaluation and the evaluation of four main categories, the evaluation of each item in each column on the

five-point scale was analyzed and presented following the order: the number of respondents and the percentage that number accounts for out of the total of 76 respondents participating in the survey (for more detail, see APPENDIX). For example:

		Excellent	Very good	Good	Not very good	Not good
5	The usefulness of Reviews in Student's Books.	35≈46.1%	27≈35.5%	13≈17.1%	0=0.0%	1≈1.3%

Findings and Discussion

1. Overall Rating

The questionnaires were sent to the schools in early May, 2015 and were returned to VEPH in late May, 2015. Of 92 schools under survey, 47 participated with 76 teachers returning the questionnaires. From the results obtained, it can be said that the teachers have a very positive view of the quality of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4*. This is can be seen in the fact that the overall evaluation of the teachers on 52 items at three scales excellent, very good, and good is very high: 97.7%, of which 36.3% rated as excellent, 43.5% rated as very good, and 18.2% rated as good; only 2.0% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good.

2. Teachers' Evaluation of the Textbooks in Each of the Four Categories

2.1. Teachers' Evaluation of the Textbooks in the "General Issues" Category

The results obtained from the "General Issues" category show that the evaluation of the teachers on *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* is very positive. Overall, the average rating of the teachers on 17 items at three levels excellent, very good, and good is very high: 96.8%, of which 34.4% rated as excellent, 44.6 % rated as very good, and 17.8% rated as good; only 2.5% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. Regarding the evaluation of particular items, six interesting points may be worth noting. First, with regard to the consistency of the structure of the textbooks (item 1), 36 teachers (47.4%) rated as excellent, 27 (35.5%) rated as very good, 12 (15.8%) rated as good, and 1 teacher rated as not very good. Secondly, concerning the occurrence of the Project section at the end of each unit – a new point of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* – and the appropriateness of this section (item 2), 33 teachers (43.4%) rated as excellent, 20 (26.3%) rated as very good, 21 (27.6%) rated as good; many teachers confirmed that Project helps pupils to develop their communicative skills in authentic communicative environment (item 3): 22 teachers (28.9%) rated as excellent, 38 (50%) rated as very good, 14 (18.4%) rated as good; a similar large number of teachers thought that Project promotes pupils' creativity (item 4): 27 teachers (35.5%) rated as excellent, 25 (32.9%) rated as very good, and 15 (19.7%) rated as good. Thirdly, most of the teachers highly appreciate the usefulness of the Review written after every

5 units (item 5): 35 teachers (46.1%) rated as excellent, 27 (35.5%) rated as very good, and 13 (17.1%) rated as good; the closeness of contents of the Review to the contents of the units (item 6) are also highly appreciated by the teachers: 33 teachers (43.4%) rated as excellent, 29 (38.2%) rated as very good, and 10 (13.2%) rated as good. Fourthly, when asked about the diversity and closeness of the topics to the primary pupil (item 9), the recycling (at a higher level) of some topics of *Tiếng Anh 3* in *Tiếng Anh 4* (item 10), and the harmony between linguistic knowledge and communication skills in the textbooks (item 11), most of the teachers responded to these items very positively: with item 9, 31 teachers (40.8%) rated as excellent, 33 (43.4%) rated as very good, and 7 (9.2%) rated as good; with item 10, 28 teachers (36.8%) rated as excellent, 32 (42.1%) rated as very good, and 12 (15.8%) rated as good; and with item 11, 22 teachers (28.9%) rated as excellent, 38 teachers (50%) rated as very good, and 10 (13.2%) rated as good. Fifthly, when asked to evaluate the textbooks' ability to promote the activity and creativity of individual work, pair work and group work (item 13) and the teachability of the textbooks (item 15), many teachers gave these items high ratings: with item 13, 26 teachers (34.2%) rated as excellent, 30 teachers (39.5%) rated as very good, and 16 (21.1%) rated as good; and with item 15, 21 teachers (27.6%) rated as excellent, 35 (46.1%) rated as very good, and 15 (19.7%) rated as good.

There are, however, two things that should be taken into consideration. First, the number of teachers who rated the integration of the contents of other primary subjects into *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* as excellent and very good is modest: only 7 teachers (9.2%) rated as excellent and 30 (39.5%) rated as very good; there are still 31 teachers (40.8%) rating the item as good and 4 (5.3%) rated as not very good. Secondly, although *Tiếng Anh 3 - Sách học sinh* (including Book 1 and Book 2 and 2 CDs) and *Tiếng Anh 4 - Sách học sinh* (including Book 1 and Book 2 and 2 CDs) each is sold at 74,000 dong (37,000 dong each) and Workbooks (including Book 1 and Book 2) are sold at 72,000 dong (36,000 dong each), in the opinion of some teachers, it seems high as compared to the average income of the pupils' parents (item 16): of 76 teachers participating in the survey, 6 (7.9%) still thought that the price is a bit too high, especially 1 teacher (1.3%) thought that the price is too high. A similar situation can be found in the price of Teacher's Book (item 17), although the current price fixed on the cover of Teacher's Book (integrated with Student's Book 1 and Book 2 and 2 CDs) is 150,000 dong, of 76 teachers taking part in the survey, 5 teachers (6.6%) thought that the price is high, especially 1 teacher (1.3%) maintained that the price is too high.

2.2. Teachers' Evaluation of the Textbooks in the "Textbook Contents" Category

The results obtained from the teachers' evaluation of the "Textbook Contents" category indicate that teachers' evaluation is very positive. Overall, the average rating of 24 items

by the 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 98.5%, of which 36.3% rated as excellent, 44.5% rated as very good, 17.7% rated as good; only 1.3% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good.

2.2.1. Teachers' Evaluation of the "Language" Section

Teachers' average rating of 11 items in the "Language" section (Phonics, Vocabulary, and Grammar) at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 98.3%, of which 34.7% rated as excellent, 43.9% rated as very good, 19.7% rated as good; only 1.0% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. With regard to Phonics, the average rating of 4 items (18, 19, 20, 21) by 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 97.7%, of which 41.8% rated as excellent, 43.1% very good, and 12.8% rated as good; only 1.6% rated as not very good, 0% rated not good. With Vocabulary, the average rating of 3 items (22, 23, 24) by the 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 99.2%, of which 32.5% rated as excellent, 46.1% rated as very good, and 20.6% rated as good; only 0.4% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. With Grammar, the average rating of 4 items (25, 26, 27, 28) by 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 98.7%, of which 29.9% rated as excellent, 43.1% rated as very good, and 25.7% rated as good; only 1.0% rated as not very good, 0% rated not good.

2.2.2. Teachers' Evaluation of the "Skills" Section

Teacher's average rating of 12 items in the "Skills" section (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 98.7%, of which 37.8% rated as excellent, 45.1% rated as very good, and 15.8% rated as good; only 1.2% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. As regard Listening, the average rating of 3 items (29, 30, 31) by 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 99.1%, of which 44.7% rated as excellent, 41.2% as very good, and 13.2% rated as good; only 0.9% rated as not very good, 0% rated not good. Concerning Speaking, the average rating of 3 items (32, 33, 34) by 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 99.1%, of which 42.5% rated as excellent, 43.9% rated as very good, 12.7% rated as good; only 0.8% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. With Reading, the average rating of 3 items (35, 36, 37) of 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 97.3%, of which 30.7% rated as excellent, 49.1% rated as very good, and 17.5% rated as good; only 2.6% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good. And with Writing, the average rating of 3 items (38, 39, 40) of 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 98.7%, of which 34.3% rated as excellent, 46.5% rated as very good, and 17.9% rated as good; only 0.9% rated as not very good, 0% rated as not good.

2.3. Teachers' Evaluation of the "Physical Features of the Textbooks" Category

Teachers' average rating of 4 items (41, 42, 43, 44) relating to the "Physical Features of the Textbooks" category at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 98.7%, of which 47.4% rated as excellent, 38.8% rated as very good, and 13.5% rated as good; no teacher rated it as not very good and not good. Detailed ratings of each of the four items is as follows: with item 41, 31 teachers (42.1%) believed that the appearance, color and presentation of the textbook covers reach excellent level, 36 teachers (47.4%) rated as very good and 8 teachers (10.5%) rated as good; with item 42, 38 teachers (50%) rated the vocabulary section and the Vietnamese equivalents at the end of Student's Book as excellent, 28 (36.8%) rated as very good, 10 (13.2%) rated as good; as for the font size and layout of the textbooks (item 43), 39 teachers (51.3%) rated as excellent, 25 (32.9%) as very good, and 11 (14.5%) rated as good, only 1 teacher (1.3%) rated as not very good; and with regard to the quality of printing (item 44), 35 teachers (46.1%) rated as excellent, 29 (38.2%) rated as very good, 12 and (15.8%) rated as good, no teacher rated as not very good and not good.

2.4. Teacher's Evaluation of the "Components Accompanying the Textbooks" Category

Teacher's average rating of 8 items in the "Components Accompanying the Textbooks" category (including audio CDS, flashcards, large-sized pictures, teaching aids, Teacher's Books, Workbooks) by 76 teachers at three levels excellent, very good, and good accounts for 92.2%, of which 26.8% rated as excellent, 41.6% rated as very good, and 23.8% rated as good. A detailed rating of each section is presented below:

With regard to audio CDs and teaching aids, teachers' average rating of 2 items (45, 46) at three levels excellent, very good and good accounts for 92.1%, of which 16.4% rated as excellent, 38.2% rated as very good, and 37.5% rated as good. Regarding the quality of the audio CDs (item 45), 14 teachers (18.4%) rated as excellent, 31 (40.8%) rated as very good, 26 (34.2 %) rated as good. And concerning the quality of the teaching aids (item 46), 11 teachers (14.5%) rated as excellent, 27 (35.5%) rated as very good, and 31 (40.8%) rated as good.

As for flashcards and large-sized pictures, teachers' average rating of 2 items (47, 48) at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 88.2%, of which 21.4% rated as excellent, 35.9% rated as very good, and 30.9% rated as good. Regarding the quality of flashcards and large-sized pictures (item 47), 16 teachers (21.1%) rated as excellent, 28 teachers (36.8%) assessed as very good, and 24 teachers (31.6%) rated as good. As for the quantity of flashcards and large-sized pictures (item 48), 15 teachers (19.7%) rated as excellent, 25 teachers (32.9%) assessed as very good, and 23 teachers (30.3%) rated as good.

Concerning Teacher's Book, teachers' average rating of 2 items (49, 50) at three levels excellent, very good, and good makes up 94.4%, of which 30.9% rated as excellent, 47.7% rated as very good, and 15.8% assessed as good. Regarding the utility of the Introduction section in Teacher's Book (item 49), 23 teachers (30.3%) rated as excellent, 38 teachers (50.0%) assessed as very good, and 11 teachers (14.5%) rated as good. And as for the guiding ability of Teacher's Book (item 50), 24 teachers (32.6%) rated as excellent, 33 teachers (43.4%) assessed as very good, and 13 teachers (17.1%) rated as good. Concerning the usefulness of Workbooks (item 51), 32 teachers (42.1%) rated it as excellent, 35 teachers (46.1%) rated as very good, 9 teachers (11.8%) rated as good, no teacher rated as not very good and not good. And as for the utility of Workbooks in extending linguistic knowledge and communicative skills of Student's Book, 28 teachers (36.8%) rated as excellent, 36 (47.4%) rated as very good, and 9 (11.8%) rated as good.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that of the four sections under the "Components Accompanying the Textbooks" category, "flashcards and large-sized pictures" is probably rated the lowest: 10.5% of the teachers still rated this section as not very good. As for the quality of flashcards and large-sized pictures (item 47), 5 teachers (6.6%) still rated as not very good; in particular, 11 teachers (14.5%) indicated that there is a shortage of flashcards and large-sized pictures (rated as not very good in this case) (item 48). Ranked second is the quality of the teaching aids (item 46): 7 teachers (9.2%) still rated as not very good. Ranked third is the quality of the audio CDs (item 45): 5 teachers (6.6%) still rated as not very good. And ranked fourth is the quality of Teacher's Book (item 50): 5 teachers (6.6%) still rated its guiding ability as not very good.

Conclusions

1. Summary

As mentioned, the aim of this survey research is to get feedback from the teachers of English of 92 primary schools who are using *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* so that further corrections and revisions will be made to perfect the materials before putting them into use on a large scale. The research used a questionnaire of 52 items as research instrument. These 52 items were organized into four major categories: General Issues (17 items), Textbook contents (23 items), Physical features of the textbooks (4 items), and Components accompanying the textbooks (8 items). Research results have indicated that teachers' evaluation of *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* is very positive: their overall average rating of 52 items, their average rating of each of the 4 categories, and their rating of each of the 52 items at three levels excellent, very good, and good are very high. This allows the researcher to conclude that basically *Tiếng Anh 3* and *Tiếng Anh 4* are written with high quality, meeting most of the criteria for a modern foreign language textbook, and, in particular, meeting the requirements of MOET's *Chương trình tiếng Anh thí điểm tiểu học* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Primary Schools).

Research results, however, have also suggested that there are still some minor drawbacks of the textbooks in the categories of "General issues" and "Components accompanying Student's Book" (specifically, items 12, 16, 17, 45, 46, 47, 50) that need to be improved to perfect the materials before putting them into use on a large scale.

2. Limitations

There are at least two limitations that should be pointed out here concerning this research. First, because the research has received feedback from only 76 teachers of 47 primary schools, the results cannot be said to fully reflect the overall picture of the quality of the textbooks. For this reason, our remarks in Section 4.1 on the high quality of the textbooks should be seen as suggestive rather than conclusive. Secondly, this research has only used questionnaire for teachers as research instrument. If class observation, teachers' interview and questionnaire for pupils were used, the research would be more comprehensive, research results would help to arrive at more convincing conclusions, and the textbook authors would have more solid bases to improve and perfect the materials.

3. Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Research

The following things should be done to overcome the limitations as mentioned above:

First, a survey that follows should be conducted to get evaluative feedback from all the rest of the English teachers who are using the textbooks in 92 primary schools.

Secondly, in addition to research on teachers' feedback, research on pupils' feedback, classroom observation and interviews of teachers and pupils should be conducted to have a full picture of the quality of the textbooks and, in particular, to see more clearly the teachability and learnability of the materials.

Thirdly, direct contacts with the surveyed teachers should be made to ask them to explain or point out specific weaknesses in those items of the questionnaire (items 12, 16, 17, 45, 46, 47, 50) which they rated as not very good and not good so as to correct and improve the materials.

Finally, as can be seen, conducting a preliminary survey using a questionnaire as research instrument like this one has already appeared to be a complex matter. Conducting a survey using a number of research instruments in order to have a comprehensive view of the quality of the textbooks may even be more complex. This kind of research requires not only time, research skills and research expertise from the researcher but also a strong support in both human and financial resources from administrative agencies and organizations, especially from VEPH and the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. This is probably the most important recommendation for this research to achieve its final aim: to further improve the quality of the primary English textbooks so as to make a worthwhile contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning English in the national education system of Vietnam.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE AND FINDINGS

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
	OVERALL RATING (52 items)	36.3%	43.5%	18.2%	2.0%	0.0%
A	General Issues	34.4%	44.6%	17.8%	2.5%	0.0%
1	The structure of the textbooks is designed in a consistent way (number of units, number of lessons in a unit, number of contents in a lesson).	36≈47.4%	27≈35.5%	12≈15.8%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
2	At the end of each unit there is a Project component which is diversified in form and content and close to the topic of the unit.	33≈43.4%	20≈26.3%	21≈27.6%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
3	Projects help the pupil to develop pupils' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in authentic communication environment, and enhance their ability to cooperate while performing the tasks.	22≈28.9%	38≈50%	14≈18.4%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
4	Projects promote the pupil's creativities.	27≈35.5%	25≈32.9%	15≈19.7%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
5	The usefulness of Reviews in Student's Books.	35≈46.1%	27≈35.5%	13≈17.1%	0=0.0%	1≈1.3%
6	The Reviews stick to what has been previously taught and consolidate the pupil's knowledge and communication skills.	33≈43.4%	29≈38.2%	10≈13.2%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
7	The stories in the Reviews are attractive and create interest to the pupil.	20≈26.3%	33≈43.4%	16≈21.1%	3≈3.9%	0=0.0%
8	The stories in the Reviews contribute to the development of the pupil's comprehension skills.	20≈26.3%	39≈51.3%	12≈15.8%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
9	The topics in the textbooks are diversified, close to real life, and are suitable to the age of the Vietnamese primary pupil.	31≈40.8%	33≈43.4%	7≈9.2%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
10	Some contents of <i>English 3</i> are repeated or recycled and expanded in <i>English 4</i> .	28≈36.8%	32≈42.1%	12≈15.8%	0=0%	0=0.0%
11	The contents of the units combine harmoniously language knowledge and communication skills, and one communication skill with the others.	22≈28.9%	38≈50.0%	10≈13.2%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
12	Some contents of other subjects (such as mathematics, geography, history, ...) are integrated into the contents of <i>English 3</i> and <i>English 4</i> .	7≈9.2%	30≈39.5%	31≈40.8%	4≈5.3%	0=0.0%
13	The activities in the textbooks promote activity and creativity of individuals and groups.	26≈34.2%	30≈39.5%	16≈21.1%	0=0%	0=0.0%
14	The textbooks reflect basic cultural values of Vietnam, some countries in South-East Asia and some main English-speaking countries.	21≈27.6%	29≈38.2%	19≈21.1%	3≈3.9%	0=0.0%
15	The textbooks can be exploited to teach effectively.	21≈27.6%	35≈46.1%	15≈19.7%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
16	The price of Student's Books and Workbooks suit the Vietnamese families of average income.	19≈25%	25≈32.0%	21≈27.6%	6≈7.9%	1≈1.3%
17	The price of Teacher's Books suits the primary teachers of average income.	17≈22.4%	32≈42.1%	17≈22.4%	5≈6.6%	1≈1.3%
B	Textbook contents	36.3%	44.5%	17.7%	1.3%	0.0%
I	Language	34,7%	43,9%	19.7%	1.0%	0.0%
I.1	Phonics	41.8%	43.1%	12.8%	1.6%	0.0%
18	The number of sounds introduced in each unit is adequate and appropriate.	33≈43.4%	31≈40.8%	9≈11.8%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
19	Sounds are taken for practice from words and phrases of each unit.	31≈40.8%	34≈44.7%	10≈13.2%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
20	Sounds are practised in context (in words and sentences).	32≈42.1%	32≈42.1%	10≈13.2%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
21	The Phonics section is taught and consolidated through chants and songs.	31≈40.8%	32≈42.1%	10≈13.2%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%
I.2	Vocabulary	32.5%	46.1%	20.6%	0.4%	0.0%
22	The number of new active words introduced in each unit is sufficient and appropriate (8-10 words).	27≈35.5%	32≈42.1%	17≈22.4%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
23	New words are introduced in rich and diversified contexts (supported by images, explanations, ...).	23≈30.3%	36≈47.4%	17≈22.4%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
24	New words are consolidated through chants and songs.	24≈31.6%	37≈48.7%	13≈17.1%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
I.3	Grammar	29.9%	43.1%	25.7%	1.0%	0.0%
25	The number of grammatical structures of each unit is sufficient and appropriate.	24≈31.6%	29≈38.2%	22≈28.9%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
26	Grammatical structures are introduced and practised in context (supported by images and sounds).	18≈23.7%	36≈47.4%	21≈27.6%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
27	Grammatical structures help the pupil to develop communicative competence specified in each unit.	25≈32.9%	37≈48.7%	13≈17.1%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
28	Grammatical structures are consolidated through chants and songs.	24≈31.6%	29≈38.2%	22≈28.9%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
II	Skills	37.8%	45.1%	15.8%	1.2%	0.0%
II.1	Listening	44.7%	41.2%	13.2%	0.9%	0.0%
29	The listening contents are suitable to the topic of the unit and the age of the Vietnamese primary pupil.	36≈47.4%	29≈38.2%	11≈14.5%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
30	The listening activities follow the order from easy to difficult (from <i>Listen and repeat</i> , to <i>Listen and identify information</i> , to <i>Listen and put information in order</i> , etc.) to help the pupil to develop listening skills.	35≈46.1%	31≈40.8%	8≈10.5%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
31	The listening activities are practiced in context (supported by images and word cues).	31≈40.8%	34≈44.7%	11≈14.5%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
II.2	Speaking	42.5%	43.9%	12.7%	0.8%	0.0%
32	The speaking contents are suitable to the topic of the unit, closer to real life and suitable to the age of the Vietnamese primary pupil.	32≈42.1%	31≈40.8%	12≈15.8%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
33	The speaking activities follow a logical sequence from easy to difficult (i.e., from <i>Listen and repeat</i> , to <i>Point and say</i> , and to <i>Let's talk</i>).	36≈47.4%	33≈43.4%	7≈9.2%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
34	The speaking activities in the textbooks are varied (from monologue to pair work, and to group discussion, ...).	29≈38.2%	36≈47.4%	10≈13.2%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
II.3	Reading	30.7%	49.1%	17.5%	2.6%	0.0%
35	The reading contents are suitable to the topic of the unit, close to the real life and suitable to the age of the Vietnamese primary pupil.	25≈32.9%	43≈56.6%	7≈9.2%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
36	The reading text types (monologue, dialogue, letter, email, ...) and reading comprehension activities (read and gap-fill, read and answer, read and select an appropriate picture...) of the textbooks are rich and diversified.	26≈34.2%	38≈50.0%	11≈14.5%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
37	The length, difficulty, complexity of the reading texts are appropriate.	19≈25.0%	31≈40.8%	22≈28.9%	4≈5.3%	0=0.0%
II.4	Writing	34.3%	46.5%	17.9%	0.9%	0.0%
38	Writing contents are suitable to the topic of the unit, close to the real life and the age of the Vietnamese primary pupil.	28≈36.8%	35≈46.1%	12≈15.8%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
39	The writing text types (monologue, dialogue, letter, email, form, ...) and writing activities (gap-fill, look [at pictures] and write, answer questions, etc.) are rich and diversified.	25≈32.9%	30≈39.5%	21≈27.6%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
40	Pupils can use their knowledge and personal experience to write about themselves, their families and the world around them.	23≈30.3%	40≈52.6%	12≈15.8%	1=1.3%	0=0.0%
C	Physical features of the textbooks	47.4%	38.8%	13.5%	0.3%	0.0%
41	The appearance, color and layout of the textbooks are suitable to the primary pupil.	31≈42.1%	36≈47.4%	8≈10.5%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
42	The vocabulary section and the Vietnamese equivalent at the end of Student's Books help the pupil to consult new words of each unit faster.	38≈50.0%	28≈36.8%	10≈13.2%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
43	The font size and layout of the textbooks.	39≈51.3%	25≈32.9%	11≈14.5%	1≈1.3%	0=0.0%
44	The printing quality of the textbooks.	35≈46.1%	29≈38.2%	12≈15.8%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
D	Components accompanying the textbooks	26.8%	41.6%	23.8%	6.9%	0.0%
I	Audio CDs and teaching aids	16.4%	38.2%	37.5%	7.9%	0.0%
45	The sound quality on the audio CDs.	14≈18.4%	31≈40.8%	26≈34.2%	5≈6.6%	0=0.0%
46	The quality of teaching aids accompanying the textbooks (flashcards, pictures, and other audiovisual aids, ...).	11≈14.5%	27≈35.5%	31≈40.8%	7≈9.2%	0=0.0%
II	Flashcards and large-sized pictures	21.4%	35.9%	30.9%	10.5%	0.0%
47	The quality of flashcards and large-sized pictures	16≈21.1%	28≈36.8%	24≈31.6%	5≈6.6%	0=0.0%
48	The quantity of flashcards and large-sized pictures	15≈19.7%	25≈32.9%	23≈30.3%	11≈14.5%	0=0.0%

		Excellent	Very good	good	Not very good	Not good
III	Teacher's Book	30.9%	46.7%	15.8%	5.3%	0.0%
49	The Introduction section in Teacher's Books helps the teacher to develop techniques and methods of teaching in the classroom.	23≈30.3%	38≈50.0%	11≈14.5%	3≈3.9%	0=0.0%
50	Guidelines/Suggestions in Teacher's Books help the teacher to exploit Student's Books effectively.	24≈31.6%	33≈43.4%	13≈17.1%	5≈6.6%	0=0.0%
IV	Workbook	39.5%	47.7%	11.2%	1.3%	0.0%
51	Workbooks help the pupil to revise, consolidate and develop the contents (language knowledge and communication skills) in Student's Books.	32≈42.1%	35≈46.1%	9≈11.8%	0=0.0%	0=0.0%
52	Workbooks extend the contents (language knowledge and communication skills) of Student's Books appropriately.	28≈36.8%	36≈47.4%	9≈11.8%	2≈2.6%	0=0.0%

NARROW FORM-FOCUSED INSTRUCTION: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Globalization and increasingly intensive international integration of countries in the world have been creating opportunities for cultural exchange and economic development cooperation on a global scale. In relation to this context, Project Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, Period 2008-2020 (the NFLP 2020) (2008) states: "... among the conditions necessary for integration and development, foreign languages are a powerful and effective tool ..." and "... only those citizens with appropriate language competence and skills in the context of multicultural communication could establish the channels of communication necessary for successful cooperation". In search of a classroom practice that is efficient in developing English language competence and skills appropriate for effective multicultural communication, this paper introduces a narrow form-focused approach to English as a foreign language (EFL) education as a contribution to the attaining of the NFLP 2020 major goals based on the insights drawn from two sources: 1) an overview of literature on intercultural communicative competence, common underlying proficiency, form-focused instruction; and 2) data on current English language teaching (ELT) practice in Vietnamese schools. A significant feature of this approach is that it entails considerable innovations in curriculum development.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, form-focused instruction, narrow form-focused instruction

Introduction

A major problem for beginning foreign language learners is that, while these learners' cognitive capabilities and knowledge of communication are more or less established through their first language (L1), their knowledge of the target language (L2) is almost a zero. To put it another way, there is a mismatch between the learners' L1 "meaning potential" and their L2 form potential. This is quite often the case of teaching and learning English as a foreign language worldwide. In the Vietnamese teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) context, although there have been reforms in curriculum design leading to the designing of corresponding English textbooks together with considerable efforts

from the people involved, the results of English education still fall short of the target. That discouraging fact has given impetus to the current paper in the hope of contributing to the improvement of the effectiveness of English education in Vietnamese educational institutions. The paper comprises an introduction, a conclusion and three main parts: 1) Theoretical background to a narrow form-focused instruction; 2) Narrow form-focused instruction in English as a foreign language education; and 3) Implications for innovating English curriculum design.

Theoretical background to a narrow form-focused instruction

1. Intercultural communicative competence

The concept of *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC) as a whole is not much different from that of *communicative competence*. In fact, there is some difference in respect to their sub-components. Hymes (1972), in defining the term *communicative competence*, did not directly refer to the "...knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and social meaning of language" as a separate component of the concept. Therefore, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) further developed the concept to include socio-linguistic competence (the ability to communicate in an appropriate manner in a multicultural environment), grammatical competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. More recently, some scholars like Byram (1997), Byram and Fleming (1998), Fantini (2000) etc., generalized the above views on communicative competence and conceptualized ICC as *expanded communicative competence*. According to Byram (1997), ICC requires that the learner have certain attitudes and skills beyond the above-named components of communicative competence. According to him, interlocutors in a multi-cultural environment need openness, curiosity, avoidance of judging the culture(s) of their communication partners as well as the ability to create interactive relationships in line with communication circumstances and interpret messages correctly in the real-time communication process. Fantini (2009), for his part, emphasized the important role of language proficiency in intercultural communication.

The above analysis shows that the named scholars focus their discussion almost entirely on the different aspects of linguistic competence in ICC. Though Byram (1997) does refer to knowledge about one's interlocutors' cultures in relation to ICC, none of the scholars explicitly bring up the body of knowledge about the world that provides staple "food for thought" in the communication process. To put it another way, they attend to the form for expressing meaning, not the potential meaning that this form is to convey in the actual communication process of interlocutors. Therefore, we add *World competence*, a meaning potential component, to the existing ICC and thus proposing an interactive model of ICC as follows:

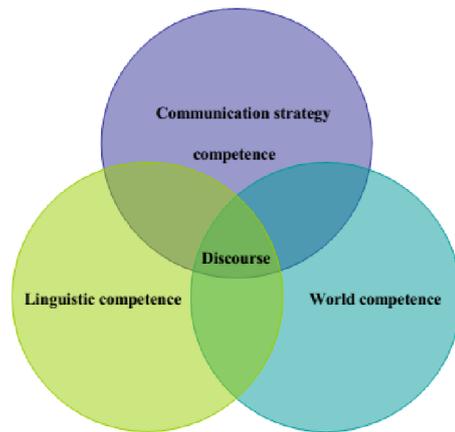


Figure 1: Intercultural communicative competence: An interactive model (Developed from Do Ba Quy, 2009)

In the above model, *linguistic competence* represents the body of knowledge about the grammar, socio-linguistics and discourse of a language. *World competence* consists of two blocks of knowledge, *general world knowledge* and *specific world knowledge*. *Specific world knowledge*, in its turn, is subdivided into *field-specific knowledge* and *culture-specific knowledge*. *Communication strategy competence* refers to a set of communication skills such as emotion control skill, verbal and nonverbal interactive behavior control skill, meaning negotiation skill and conversational turn control skill. These skills help make the performance of communicative acts both effective and appropriate to the expectations of interlocutors from different cultures.

2. Common underlying proficiency

Cummins (1981) proposed the theory of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) in relation to bilateral communicative competence. According to this theory, between any two languages there is always a close relationship. Cummins (1984) says that the concepts already established and the knowledge already built through L1 can be easily transferred to L2. This point is visually illustrated through Cummins' (1981) "Dual iceberg" representation of bilingual proficiency given in Figure 2 below:

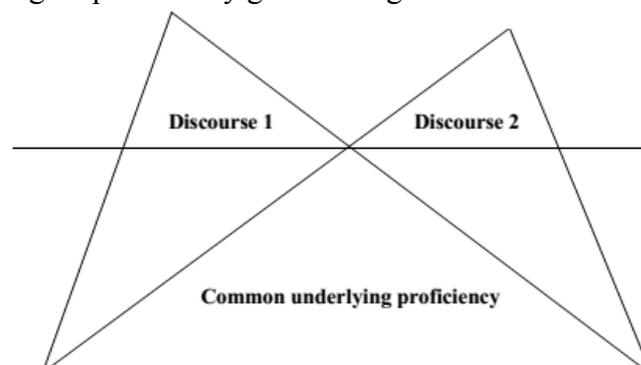


Figure 2: "Dual iceberg" representation of bilingual proficiency

This figure shows an “iceberg” with two peaks rising above the water surface. One peak symbolizes what can be observed and heard by means of L1 (Discourse 1), while the other peak represents the same message expressed by means of L2 (Discourse 2). Discourse 1 and Discourse 2 are usually different, and can also be very different, in terms of spelling, sound, prosody and word order. However, both discourses are supported by shared conceptual knowledge as well as the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the speaker. These shared elements are embodied in the invisible, underlying, overlapping parts of the two languages. Cummins (1984) also observes that although languages usually share little knowledge of grammar, literacy skills established in L1 will easily transfer to L2.

Figure 2 also suggests that the separate (non-overlapping) parts represent the language-specific proficiencies including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar stored in each language.

In summary, though Discourse 1 and Discourse 2 usually differ outwardly, they are all the tangible results of the interaction among the two common invisible *non-language-specific* knowledge blocks: world knowledge and communication strategy knowledge, and *language-specific* knowledge of L1 and L2 respectively. This point together with the above analysis and discussion has a very important implication for localizing second language instruction.

3. Form-focused instruction

In language teaching practice, every teacher is concerned with issues regarding the most effective instructional approaches to teaching languages in general and their vocabulary and grammar in particular.

Concerning the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, second language teaching methodology has offered extreme approaches: *Focus on forms* and *focus on meaning*. To avoid the extremes, Long (1991) introduced the notion of *focus on form* or *form-focused instruction* (FFI) which was taken to be a balanced approach to second language education. It emphasizes not only the importance of communicative language use, but also the explicit teaching of problematic L2 linguistic forms as they arise during the communication process. Long (1991, pp. 45-46) defines focus on form as follows:

Focus on form... overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication.

More specifically, Long & Robinson (1998, p. 23) state that FFI “...often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one or more of the students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production”.

Ellis (2001, pp. 1-2) further defines FFI as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form”.

At this point, the term “form” needs clarifying. *Form* has usually been used to refer to grammar, but according to some scholars, “form” is taken to mean much more than grammar alone. According to Ellis et al. (2001), “form” is related to phonology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and spelling. We agree with this broad definition of *form*. For us, *form* means *means of conveying meaning*; therefore, *if means are incorrect, meaning is distorted*. So, it is unquestionable that in language teaching, especially, in second/foreign language teaching, *form should be the most attended to*.

Narrow form-focused instruction in English as a foreign language education

The analysis and discussion in Part 1 suggest that FFI can be highly applicable to EFL education. However, the above-defined FFI in second language education is too broad to be readily applied to EFL education in the current Vietnamese context. There are three major reasons for this. First, the approach was proposed, applied and experimented almost entirely in English as a second language (ESL) context. Second, the Vietnamese learner of English, like any other learning communities, has culture-specific characteristics which affect the way the learner learns. Third, the teaching and learning conditions typical of Vietnamese schools have their own features. Therefore, to be an effective and efficient instructional approach to EFL education in Vietnam, the proposed FFI needs localizing to suit the learning needs of the specific learners. The FFI is localized into *Narrow form-focused instruction* (NFFI) by narrowing *form* input. More specifically, in the NFFI concept, *form* is narrowed with an EFL teaching-learning cycle beginning with narrow form input through narrow reading (reading on one and the same topic). As any kind of language input is *form*, planning input can control the type and scope of lexico-grammar forms. In other words, in NFFI, the lexico-grammatical form in language input can be ensured to be at ‘i+1’ level or comprehensible (Krashen, 1982).

Concerning the teaching procedure following NFFI, although it may retain both planned and incidental instructional activity dealing with problematic language forms advocated by FFI, NFFI is innovative in three ways. First, the developing of the four major language skills reading, listening, speaking and writing in each teaching unit centres on one and the same topic. Second, the instruction cycle begins with (narrow) reading followed by listening, speaking and writing. Third, input processing, both individual and collaborative, for proper comprehension of new *form* is ensured before any practice can take place; this distinctive feature is central to NFFI.

To specifically guide an EFL teaching practice that is expected to make up for the shortcomings of the linear Presentation → Practice → Production (PPP) English teaching procedure highly common in Vietnamese schools, the following narrow form-focused EFL teaching-learning cycle is proposed:

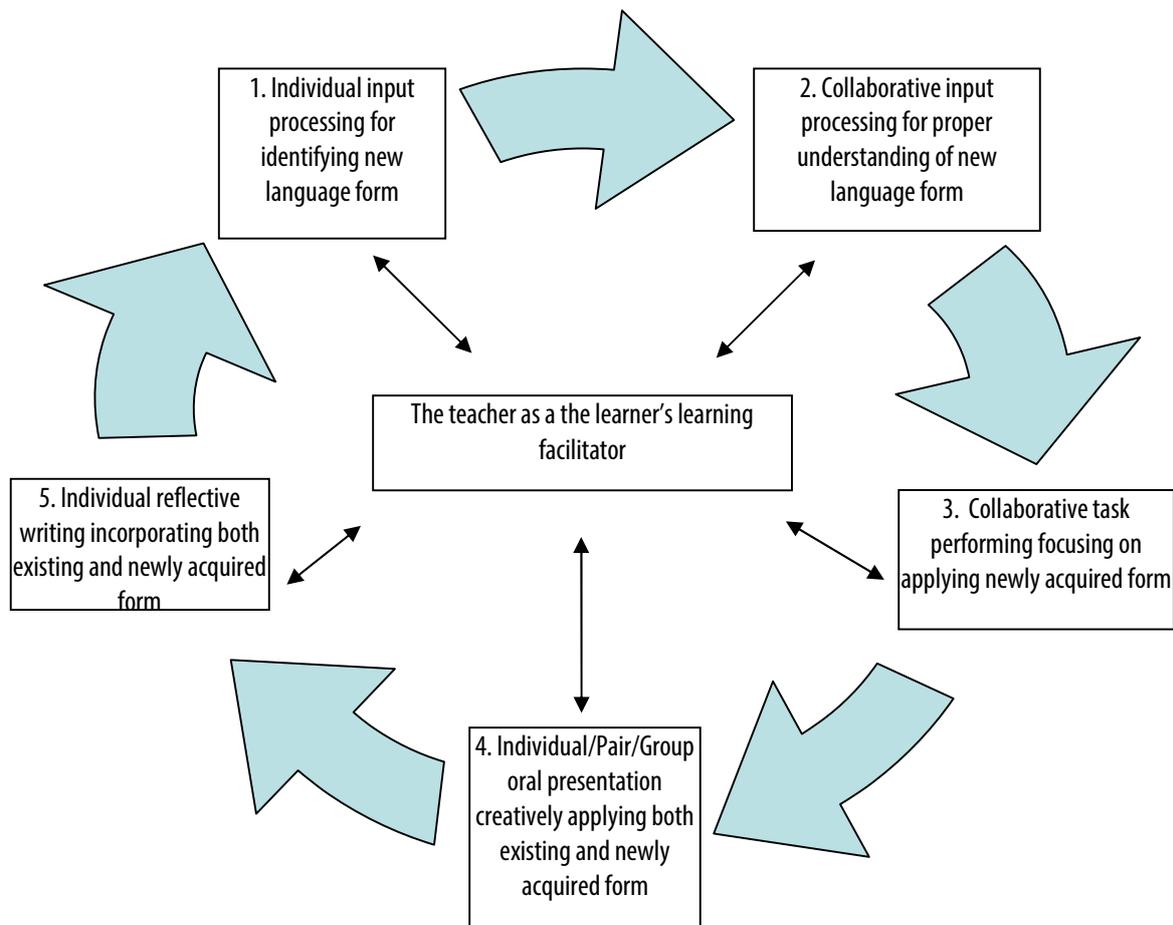


Figure 3: Narrow form-focused EFL teaching-learning cycle

Implications for innovating English curriculum design

In light of the insights from the theoretical background to NFFI and its nature, the following three major implications are drawn for the innovating of English as a foreign language curriculum design:

The first and foremost implication is that the curriculum content should highlight the interdisciplinarity among the subjects in the school educational program, especially between Vietnamese and English so that literacy skills can be transferred between the languages. In addition, interdisciplinarity ensures an effective acquisition of multidisciplinary knowledge and skills, including such vital skills as questioning, investigating, critical thinking, team-working, problem solving, and decision-making skills.

Second, a set of cognitively dignifying topics that would be appropriate for the age, education level and education context needs to be identified at the onset as a key guideline for subsequent teaching materials development as well as for using the knowledge gained through English to support, reinforce and consolidate knowledge in other subject areas.

Third, more emphasis should be placed on the curriculum content focusing on the differences between Vietnamese and English to make the acquisition of English-specific forms more efficient.

Conclusion

That Vietnam is becoming a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community and a partner of the Trans-Pacific Partnership at the end of 2015 and at the end of 2016 respectively intensifies the demand for human resources with a truly good command of English. To successfully cope with the emerging context, the Vietnamese education managers and English educators have started joining efforts towards making the teaching of English more efficient. Hopefully, the proposed *narrow form-focused instruction* would make a timely contribution to those meaningful efforts.

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CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AT HANOI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

The context of globalization has caused nations around the world to take steps to meet the demands of the increasingly competitive employment market. The Vietnamese government has introduced a number of initiatives to equip its labour force with the knowledge and skills needed, one of which is the community of practice building project. Using documentary methodology with Hofstede's cultural dimensions as the analytical framework, this study aims to find out the most appropriate strategies for cultivating communities of practice (CoPs) to suit the Vietnamese educational context; and to offer tentative community of practice (CoP) models for students of English at Hanoi National University of Education. The findings have contributed to the discussion regarding the three main factors to consider in cultivating CoPs in Vietnam, namely motivation, structure and relationship. The study has also offered two possible models of CoPs for Hanoi National University of Education and implications for other institutions in Vietnam.

Keywords: Community of practice, sustainable development, students, cultural dimensions, online CoPs, extra class activities

Introduction

The current context of globalization and the knowledge economy has caused the employment market to become very competitive and demanding. Therefore, in order to be employable, one needs to be well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. This has made human capital the most important output of higher education (Little & Green, 2009; Schriewer, 2003; Wende, 2003). Hence, the world has become a learning society, in which its members need to be lifelong learners, continuously learning and upgrading their knowledge and skills needed for this rapidly changing world and for sustainable development.

Having taken account of the world context of globalisation, and the current context of education in Vietnam, the government has placed great emphasis on the importance of English language education (Government Portal, 2012). The Foreign Language Project 2020 was established to implement innovative activities to improve English language education in Vietnam. One of the many schemes initiated by the Foreign Language Project 2020 is the initiative to establish communities of learning for Vietnamese teachers and students of English in 19 universities sited though out Vietnam.

Set in these contexts, using documentary methodology, this study aims:

- to find out the most appropriate strategies for cultivating CoPs to suit the Vietnamese educational context;
- to offer tentative CoP models for students of English at Hanoi National University of Education.

Literature review

The concept of communities of practice (CoPs) was first developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991, whilst studying how knowledge, skills and understanding of best practices are shared largely through informal exchanges in the workplace (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It was defined as ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). Thus, this is a process of collective learning in a shared environment, where the members can contribute ideas with equal standing and voluntarily participate to achieve a common goal. This type of informal learning has proven advantageous over formal classroom learning due to the high degree of sharing in a safe environment. Paas & Parry (2012) maintain that CoPs’ members share a high degree of trust and commitment (p. 4) and participate in a relaxed and informal atmosphere with a non-hierarchical structure (ibid., p.6). These features promote a desire to share and maximize the participation and contribution from shier members, and therefore, ensure that all can share their ideas.

However, not every community can be called a community of practice (CoP) as a CoP has its own characteristics. According to Wenger (2011), a CoP must have the following characteristics:

- The domain: This is the area of concern that all the members of a CoP share and have interest in. This area of interest makes the CoP different from other communities and, therefore, contributes to the formation of the community’s identity. The domain of CoPs in this study is English learning. All the members of the CoPs in this study share the same goal: improving English performance.
- The community: in pursuing the group’s interest, its members voluntarily come together and build relationships as they exchange knowledge and learn from one another. They engage in joint activities to share information and exchange knowledge. A website itself, for example, is not a CoP. By the same token, people from the same job, e.g., teachers of English are not CoPs unless they come together to interact and discuss ideas, experiences, or ways to solve problems.
- The practice: Members of a CoP meet regularly to share ideas. This is a shared practice, which takes time and sustained interaction. A conversation at a conference can provide you with information and knowledge, but it does not make a community of practice, as it is not sustained practice. Thus, members of a CoP develop a shared repertoire of knowledge for their practice.

The combination of the above three elements makes a community of practice. With these elements, CoPs promote informal and practice-based learning and facilitate problem-solving skills. CoPs can be known under many different names - learning networks, thematic groups, clubs (Wenger, 2011); and can be organised through regular events, such as, meetings, conferences, list postings and member profiles that can bring members together either face-to-face or electronically (Paas & Parry, 2012); and can be established in different settings – within organisations (intra-organisational CoPs) or collectively involving a number of different organisations (inter-organisational CoPs) (ibid.). Kietzmann et al. (2013) also offered a type of mobile community of practice, where mobile members can share knowledge on the go using mobile technology.

The theory of ‘community of practice’ has become of increasing interest to practitioners. They appreciate the role of CoPs as a strategy to develop knowledge and skills effectively in order to improve performance (Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling, & Stuedemann, 2006; Paas & Parry, 2012; Wenger, 2011). For example, Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley (2003) have proved that CoPs enable practitioners bridge the gap between theories and practice, ‘connecting what we know with what we do’. Johnson (2001) indicated in his study that online communities of practice are able to encourage ‘introverted participants to share their ideas on an equal footing with extroverts’ (p.45). Fontaine & Millen (2004) pointed out various benefits and measured the impact of communities of practice in their study.

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as the analytical framework

The influence of culture on learning and on people’s thinking has been highlighted in many studies (Hofstede, 1986; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Lun, Fischer, & Ward, 2010; Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005). This understanding of the relationship between culture and mind is central to the work of Hofstede et al. (2010). Hofstede’s cultural framework views cultural differences among nations along six dimensions, namely ‘Power distance’, ‘Collectivism vs. Individualism’, ‘Femininity vs. Masculinity’, ‘Uncertainty avoidance’, ‘long - term vs. short-term orientation’ and ‘Indulgence vs. Restraint’ (Hofstede et al., 2010). Hofstede’s dimensions have gained much popularity and there have been a number of studies that support and apply Hofstede’s model in different fields including education (Tavakoli et al., 2003; Naumov & Puffer, 2000; Everdingen & Waarts, 2003; Vitell et al., 1993; Pagell et al., 2005; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Le, 2013). Bing (2004) maintained that what has probably made his work so well received is its practical applications and its visible dimensions. Hofstede created six dimensions, with indexes scored along each to all 93 countries; these dimensions are linked to specific areas of society, such as, workplace, family, religion, social community, health care, or education. In the case of our own study, we were particularly drawn to the fact that the cultural traits of Vietnam and its Confucian influences can be witnessed along different dimensions and therefore can be used to analyse the data of this study.

Findings and discussions

1. What are the most appropriate strategies for cultivating communities of practice in the Vietnamese educational context?

Communities of practice offer a philosophy of learning by doing and learning through participation. Lave and Wenger coined the term whilst studying apprenticeship as a learning model. This learning model is closely related to some constructivist learning theories that explain the process of learning by doing and learning through social interaction. These are the interactive learning model developed by Vygotsky (1978) and the experiential learning cycle proposed by (Kolb, 1984). These theories of learning, as well as the model of CoPs hold a common belief that knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner and learning is the process of construction (Bodner, 1986; Cunningham & Duffy, 1996; Tynjälä, 1999; Karin, 2009). They reject the idea that knowledge is passively received. According to Karin (2009), research on learning in different situations and different cultural settings suggests that ‘knowledge is not an independent phenomenon, but situated in the activity, context and culture in which it is developed’ (p.57).

Whilst studying Hofstede’s cultural dimensions we found that these premises seem did not sit comfortably with the characteristics of Vietnamese learners. The following elements of CoPs should be taken into account:

Motivation

A critical factor that makes a success of a CoP is that the members have to demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation, i.e., their participation is voluntary. They are willing to join the group because they have their own interest in the group’s activities. Also, every member is willing to contribute and share ideas.

Vietnam is regarded as a highly collectivistic society according to Hofstede’s dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010), which suggests that Vietnamese people act in the interests of the group; harmony should be maintained; offence often leads to shame or loss of face, so should be avoided. As a collectivistic group Vietnam learners seem to be able to fit well into CoPs. However, they tend to save face and maintain harmony, and therefore, are often not willing to participate in groups (Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2005; Thanh, 2008). Therefore, in order for CoPs in Vietnam to be successful both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation needs to be maintained. Thus, the participation of the CoPs’ members needs to be a combination of both voluntary and compulsory work.

Structure

CoPs feature informal learning, which suggests that the structure of CoPs needs to be informal. This distinguishes CoPs from formal classroom learning.

On the dimension of ‘Indulgence versus Restraint’, Vietnam is characterised as restrained. This indicates that Vietnamese people have the perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong. The Vietnamese education environment confers quite strict rules on both teachers and students. Saito et al., studying a case at a Vietnamese primary school, maintained that ‘In Vietnam,..., teachers have learnt to follow the rules established by the ministry and organise their behaviour accordingly’ (Bjork, 2005, p.164 cited in Saito et al., 2008) and that ‘there are many ways in which students can be placed under their teachers’ rule’ (Saito et al., 2008). Switching from such a formal and strict learning environment to an informal learning atmosphere would not be easy. Therefore, whilst aiming for a more informal learning environment we should combine both types until CoPs have developed sustainably.

Relationship

CoPs must develop equal standing among the members in order to encourage sharing, which means there will be no hierarchical relationship.

According to Hofstede et al. (2010), Vietnam sits in the group of large power distance countries. This implies that Vietnamese people generally think that hierarchy, centralisation, and inherent inequalities are acceptable, and that subordinates are expected to obey and do what they are told. These features would be a barrier to any intention to disrupt a hierarchical order. The learner would still expect to learn from an expert. Therefore, we suggest that at present CoPs in Vietnam maintain a combination of both equal and hierarchical relationships.

2. What are the possible CoP models?

Combined all these three elements, we would like to offer the following models of CoPs to establish at Hanoi National University of Education.

An Online Community of Practice

An Online Community of Practice (OCoP) is a Community of Practice developed on, and maintained using the Internet. Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE) has established an OCoP for its English non-majored students, allowing them to share experiences through a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange forum. This forum aims at providing participants with English learning materials, English learning strategies, areas of interest such as arts, natural and social sciences, and entertaining corners including celebrities, music, movie, games, competitions etc. The language used in the forum is English. Administrators, editors and participants to the OCoP are all students. Forum members participate in a process of collective learning and share ideas of their interests via this electronic tool. A group of key student leaders will need to be trained to handle this OCoP. A system of appropriate rewards or punishment will also need to be considered to sustain this OCoP.

A tutoring club

Tutoring Club is where English majored students help the non-majored ones improve their English language proficiency. Tutoring club offers free sessions for students who need help with their homework and assignments. The purpose of the club is to provide opportunities for students to help each other in learning English outside the classroom. The club offers students wishing to improve their English proficiency an opportunity to get help in a pleasant and safe environment. It is also a platform for senior students to contribute their expertise acquired from the university. By helping their peers in this way, these senior students can also practice their teaching skills needed for their later career. The club meets regularly once a week. The content of each session will be informed beforehand via the OCoP. Training will be provided to a group of key students, who are in charge of the content and management of the club.

Conclusion

Cultivating CoPs needs to be contextualised. Thus, whilst aiming for the development of learners' skills needed for their lifelong learning, we have to consider the deep-seated cultural traits in the CoPs' members' motivation, CoPs' structure and the relationship among the members of the CoPs. Giving careful consideration to these issues will assist to successfully introduce CoPs in Vietnam.

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ENCOURAGING THE IMPROVISATION ABILITY FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS OF FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY AT HNUE

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Abstract

While studying a foreign language, the more students produce their own versions of the target language, the more successful both the teachers and the learners are. It is the teachers' duty to find the methods to help students give accurate and quick language responses. This article firstly deals with the needs to foster students' improvisation skill, and then gives some theoretical background for the essential terms of improvisation, lateral thinking, critical thinking, and finally aims at introducing some practical ways to encourage students' improvisation ability that the author has applied to her advanced students at Faculty of Philology, Hanoi National University of Education, during their ESP course.

Keywords: encourage, improvisation ability, English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Introduction

In the process of learning and teaching a language, the ability to apply the target language into ordinary activities plays a crucial part. It is the task of the class teacher to create a friendly atmosphere in which the learners are completely encouraged to develop their strength especially the capacity to use the language that they are studying into new contexts. In recent time, the new trend of communicative competence proves to be dominant. Therefore, language teachers have to think of the best ways to navigate their learners to success.

At Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE), non English major students have courses on General English, which provides them with basic skills in language learning and teaching : reading, writing, listening, and speaking and are usually carried out by lecturers of English from Faculty of English. After that, they have courses on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and these courses are usually taken in charge by lecturers of different faculties. Luckily, the author has the chance to work with advanced students of some faculties at HNUE and she considers this is a good chance for students to use the English language in different angles. She has also had precious opportunities to work with advanced students of Faculty of Philology from course 56 to course 62. In their course, students get used to the panorama of the general ideas of different main types of literature such as drama, poetry, novels... In this study, the author would like to focus on the improvisation of those students in poetry and short stories only; the improvisation of other types of literature may be mentioned at other times.

Research questions

In this study, the author aims at the following research questions:

1. Why do teachers need to encourage students' improvisation ability?
2. How can teachers foster students' improvisation ability?

Development

In the case of philology students, after being introduced a new genre such as poetry or short stories, they have to produce one piece of their own basing on the rules, the concepts of the kind that they have learnt. The more they can apply what they have learnt in a creative way, the more successful they are. Throughout the author's experiences, she has realized that the better improvisation ability the students have, the more likely they are successful in their ESP course.

What is improvisation?

When coming to a matter of thinking, the human brain has to deal with problem-solving. As far as <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/improvise>, to improvise means “to perform or make quickly from materials and sources available, without previous planning” or “to perform (a poem, play, piece of music, etc.), composing as one goes along.” If a student wants to be a good improviser, he or she has to be very good at making something new on the spot, or in other words, be very good at writing a poem or a short story in a very limited time, using all his or her language competence.

According to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisation>, “**Improvisation** is the practice of acting, dancing, singing, playing *musical instruments*, talking, creating artworks, problem solving, or reacting in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings.” In an ESP course like the one for philology students, it seems to be more important to produce a piece of new version based on some given rules as the more the students can make something new, the closer they are to the target language.

Why do teachers need to foster students' improvisation ability?

The class teacher needs to bear in mind that the more his or her students can use the target language in varied ways, the better learners they will be. Through the author's own experience, she has thought that the class teacher plays a crucial part in forming and increasing her students' capacity to produce their own ideas or voice. Thus, the class teacher really needs to help his or her students with improvisation skill especially with the ESP course for students of Faculty of Philology at H.N.U.E.

📖 Using the target language in varied ways

In order to help students to be able to use the foreign language that they are studying more, the class teacher needs to think of the ways for his or her students to be activated, and the very essential way especially for philology students is the way to create new things from the available source i. e, improvisation way. When using the target language, the class teacher should remember that:” *Target Language use will vary depending on the stage of the teacher's evolution. Every teacher will use a different amount of the target language for different reasons. What is important, however, is recognizing WHY one is or is not using the target language and deciding if that reason is appropriate given where you are at in your own evolution, and in terms of the students' needs.*”

(<http://www2.education.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.Bilash/best%20of%20bilash/targetlanguage.html>)

The more actively involved the students are, the more varied aspect of the target language they get.

📖 Develop lateral thinking

In his book *The Use of Lateral Thinking* in 1967, Dr. de Bono

(<http://members.optusnet.com.au/charles57/Creative/Techniques/sixhats.htm>)

stated: “*is solving problems through an indirect and creative approach, using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic.*” With his famous theory, “*Six Hats*” represent six modes of thinking and they have to be known as directions to thinking rather than labels for thinking. Thus, they are used proactively not reactively.

📖 Enhancing critical thinking

As defined in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_thinking: “ *Critical thinking is an important element of all professional fields and academic disciplines (by referencing their respective sets of permissible questions, evidence sources, criteria, etc.). Within the framework of scientific skepticism, the process of critical thinking involves the careful acquisition and interpretation of information and use of it to reach a well-justified conclusion.*”

📖 Raising autonomous capacity and self-confidence

Autonomy is what all educational systems in the world aim to because it combines understanding to mean “*one who gives oneself their own law*”

(as <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomy>). When students are forced to write their own lyrics, they have to use their capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision to write what they want, what they need to express themselves.

Gradually, students are used to working on their own and quickly adapt to the new tasks and raise their self- confidence.

How can teachers foster students' improvisation ability?

It is said that, “*it is easier said than done*”, when giving students a task, the class teacher has to think of the procedure to help his or her students to reach their goals. From the author's own experience, the following pieces of advice have been applied and have had some primitive success.

Giving clear guide and required criteria

For each type of different tasks, the learners need to be sure what they are going to do. In a class, whenever a new task is delivered, the students have to be given the ones that they are going to take in a very clear way. For instance, if the class teacher wants his or her philology students to make a new diamante, he or she has to give students the rules for a diamante, or usually the rules can be illustrated by a real diamante as a model.

E.g.: Diamantes are diamond-shaped poems of seven lines with following rules:

<i>Line 1: Noun or subject</i>	<i>Home</i>
<i>Line 2: Two Adjectives</i>	<i>Safe, caring</i>
<i>Line 3: Three 'in' words</i>	<i>Line 3: Three 'in' words</i>
<i>Line 4: Four words about the subject</i>	<i>Friendship, food, car, travels</i>
<i>Line 5: Three 'in' words</i>	<i>Living, loving, enjoying</i>
<i>Line 6: Two adjectives</i>	<i>Joyous, adventurous</i>
<i>Line 7: Synonym for the subject</i>	<i>Family</i>

Following is a diamante by such as the following improvised by Ngoc Ha - a philology student of K62 at H.N.U.E:

Language
Hard, important
Listening, Reading, Writing
Songs, Games, stories, films
Studying, loving, enjoying
Automatic, quick
English

Fostering by scaffolding

When being given a new task, students should be given easier task to complete first, and then move on to more difficult tasks. In her class, the author first gave her students a model

of rhyming scheme from a stanza of a famous poem “*When we two parted*” by Lord Byron such as the following:

*“When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted,
To sever for years,”*

The students were given the questions to work out the rhyming word pairs from the given stanza: “*parted*” - “*hearted*” and “*tears*” – “*years*”. Then, the students were able to produce their own love poem after that example.

Varifying tasks with choice

So as to make progress from the students, the class teacher should challenge students from giving them different tasks at different time and for different genres. In the author’s class, the students were required to make their own version from the pre-course test by writing their acrostic poem with the title either “LOVE” or “HATE”, during the course they have to write a lot such as their own haiku, tangka, short stories based on the given settings, characters, themes...etc. In the mid-term test, they have to choose one from two different endings of a story with the same beginning, and they have to produce the middle part to suit their chosen ending. The following is an example:

Read the beginning and two different ends of the following story. Create what you think happened during the middle part of it within 120 words by choosing ONE ending.

The beginning

Ken Passell was born in Columbus, Ohio. He came from a large, working-class family. His father worked in a flour mill, and his mother was a factory worker. When Ken was a child, he was very good with his hands.

2 Different endings

1- The wedding was held in the biggest church in Los Angeles. Then Ken and Cindy left on their private yacht for a honeymoon cruise to Baja, Mexico. When they return, they will live in their 20-room mansion in Beverly Hills.

2- Ken and his wife Cindy were arrested last week in London. They had over \$250,000 in cash in a suitcase, and Cindy was wearing over \$100,000 in jewelry. Inspector Quinn said, “This is one of the most bizarre cases I have ever been involved with.”

From the same beginning, the students can choose one of the two different endings and they are free to create the middle part to suit their chosen ending and through the author’s observation, her students have been eagerly improvised their middle part of their writing corner in very interesting ways.

Conclusion

In the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, it is necessary for language teachers to think of the ways to help students develop their improvisation ability for it is essential part of producing the target language that they are studying. With the issues presented in this study, it is hopeful that the two research questions have been fully answered through the analysis to answer why the class teacher should help students to develop their improvisation ability and the real pieces of tips applied by the author into her class for philology students.

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PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM FOR MATH MAJORS STUDENTS IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014 - 2015

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Abstract

With regards to the fulfillment of the National foreign Language Project 202, Hanoi National University of Education has taken the initiative to train teachers of Mathematics in English since the year 2013. This study aims to investigate first-year Math-majored students' opinions and satisfaction at Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE) and provide a micro evaluation of Intensive Language Program specially designed for Math-majored students in the academic year 2014-2015. Using a combination of quantitative evaluation approaches, the researchers use questionnaires, and test scores. The results reveal that the students represent academically-average and above average outcome after the first academic year and that they are generally satisfied with all the aspects of the course, including physical learning and teaching environment, course content, textbooks and supplementary worksheets, assessment and evaluation, and benefits of the course. The results also suggest that needs analysis be conducted prior to the beginning of the course in order to achieve more satisfactory outcomes.

Keywords: evaluation, academic outcome, program evaluation, micro

Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in the purpose and methods of evaluation in language teaching (e.g. Sheldon, 1988; Alderson & Beretta, 1992; Weir & Roberts, 1994; Ellis, 1997, 1998; cited in Valiljevic, 2011). In the literature, the term *evaluation* is used in a number of different ways and based on the writer's purpose, various definitions have been proposed.

Evaluation plays a crucial role in curriculum development as it allows instructors, material designers and administrators to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a particular language program or any of its components and make informed definitions about how to proceed.

Context

Among the initiatives made in implementing the Vietnamese Prime Minister's Decision 1400/QD-TTg on the approval of the national project entitled "Teaching and learning a foreign language in the national education system, Period 2008-2020" (2008) was the teaching of mathematics in English to be practiced in a number of high schools in big cities

like Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. In response to this proposal, in 2013, Hanoi National University of Education started to admit math-majored students for the intensive English program under the proposal approved by the MOET. The first class in 2013 had 53 students, with different English levels and learning backgrounds. In 2014, HNUE admitted another 50 students in the school and in 2015 another 50. The students take the Intensive English program during the first four semesters at university, and they students are targeted for B2 level (CEFR) after the course. After the first four semesters, the intensive English program ends, but the students still carry on their study of major-related subjects in English. The number of credits for English was initially 28 in 2013, but later reduced to and currently fixed at 25 in 2014 and 2015 due to changes in the curriculum made under the university policy for the new academic year.

The new and currently employed intensive language program has 25 credits, including seven subjects in English. Tieng Anh 1, Tieng Anh 2 and Tieng Anh 3 are taught in semester 1, each with 4 hours of in-class contact and 4 hours of self-study each week. Tieng Anh 4 and Tieng Anh 5 are taught in semester 2, each with 4 hours of in-class contact and 4 hours of self-study each week. Tieng Anh 6 is taught in semester 3, with 2 hours of in-class contact and 2 hours of self-study each week. Tieng Anh 7 is taught in semester 4, with 3 hours of in-class contact and 3 hours of self-study. Tieng Anh 1, Tieng Anh 2 and Tieng Anh 3 focus on developing students' language skills and components at A2+ level, targeted for B1 level. Language skills and components are taught integratedly. For the first semester, Tieng Anh 3 is designed to provide students with basic knowledge of basic sentence structures and pronunciation, as it has been revealed from the pre-test that most students lack systematic knowledge of these fields. Tieng Anh 4 and 5 are designed to improve student's language competence at B1+ level (CEFR), with reading and writing and speaking and listening taught integratedly. Tieng Anh 7 and 8 refine student's language skills and competence

Theoretical framework

1. Definition of evaluation

One of the most workable definitions was provided by Richards et al. (1985: 98), who defined evaluation as "the systematic gathering of information for purposes of making decisions". Another definition is given by Popham in 1975 (quoted by Brown, 1989): "Systematic educational evaluation consists of a formal assessment of the worth of educational phenomena." According to Brown (1989), the former definition is too broad, while the latter too restrictive. In Brown's definition which is then agreed upon by Weir and Roberts (1994), evaluation is referred to as "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within a context of a particular institutions involved."

2. Purpose of evaluation

According to Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1998, cited in Bodegas, 2009), evaluation serves three principal purposes namely (1) accountability, (2) development and (3) teacher development.

For the first purpose, evaluation, in this sense, is usually summative in focus and normally takes place at the end of an educational cycle or project. It provides information to sponsors or decision makers.

For the second purpose evaluation, in this sense, is usually formative and intended to improve the educational quality of a program or project normally while it is in progress

For the third purpose, evaluation, in this sense, is directly related to the improvement of teacher practice and is associated with the development of action research.

3. Approaches to evaluation

The quantitative method focuses on measurable products in terms of number and statistics in order to gain the objective facts, constraining people to respond in terms of fixed response categories. The quantitative method is product-oriented and according to Weir and Roberts (1994), it can measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions. Another advantage of this approach is that the analysis of quantitative data is easier, as there are clearer procedures and the researcher can use standard statistical techniques.

The qualitative method tends to rely on people as the instrument of the inquiry. This type of measurement, despite some problems related to the concept of reliability (the consistency in the production of results), has the major strength in terms of validity. Qualitative data are based on observations, interview, diary studies, meetings. Qualitative method normally give information about a much smaller number of people compared to what quantitative methods do, but the information provided can be considered a careful description of many different program situations.

A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods is widely accepted and advocated by Brown (1995), Weir and Roberts (1994), and Lynch (1996).

4. Participants in evaluation

Insiders may be teachers, students, staff and anyone else closely involved in the development and implementation of the program. According to Weir and Roberts (1994), insiders have greater experience of the situation and are aware of the history behind development. Insiders also know if the innovations and changes are appropriate to their own contexts and are also the ones that will be affected by the decision made after the report of the evaluation is submitted to the authorities or decision-makers.

Outsiders may be consultants, inspectors or administrators. Weir and Roberts (1994) claim that they can be considered experts because they have spent years teaching, running projects or training, with the drawback of not having been involved in the program to be evaluated.

According to Alderson & Scott (1992), Alderson (1993), Weir & Roberts (1994), the involvement of both outsiders and insiders in an evaluation of a program is necessary.

Methodology

This investigation stands in contrast to a one-time snapshot by an outside evaluation agency. Our evaluation is personalized, offering more thoughtful questions, capturing data over a longer time frame from a wide range of sources, but also lacks the independence of an outside evaluation.

Logically, a similar program evaluation would occur at the end of the year, when classes are over and final marks and grades are announced and posted. However, this evaluation is a work-in progress while plans for next semester's syllabus and curriculum are being formulated. A preliminary mid-year evaluation can serve as a "check-in" and offer important information to be used by the planning team to shape next year's program.

This is a formative evaluation of the Intensive English Program which is primarily aimed for the development of the program while it is in progress. Within the scope of the study, the evaluation involves the insiders, including 39 first-year Math-major students as clients of the course and three instructors who have been involved in the delivery of the course.

The research adopted a quantitative approach, with data collection instruments including questionnaire for students, and students' test scores.

1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire has eight parts, with different question forms and designed for different purposes as follows:

Part 1 includes 3 multiple choice questions designed to seek information about student's English background, previous learning experience and learning habits.

Part 2 includes 4 multiple choice questions designed to find out about the process of enrolment in the course & expectations about the course.

Parts 3 to 6 include statements designed in semantic rating scales (Likert scales) to seek student's evaluation of the course management, orientation activity, course instructors, syllabus, testing and assessment methods.

Parts 7 and 8 include open-ended questions designed to seek for student's overall course evaluation and suggestions for improvement.

The most common feelings among the attendants of the course was “worried” (48,7%), followed by “honored” (38,5%) and nervous (35,9%), then comes “special” (28,2%). Being worried and nervous on doing something new can be considered of common sense, so the dominant attitude towards the Program among the students seemed to be quite positive.

The answers also revealed that the primary and most influential source of information about the Program came from the official website of the University and Faculty while the main reason for students to take part in the course is the expected proper English proficiency on university graduation. Most students expressed their great expectations for the Program, the most popular is the ability to fluently communicate in English.

2.2. Management in the Program

The students provided generally positive feedback on the management in the Program in relation to the orientation activities, the effectiveness of the orientation as well as the facilities in the Program.

When being asked about the orientation activities prior to the course, more than 84% of the students confirmed that they had received the instructions and assistance from teaching staff. Furthermore, 83% complimented on the efficiency and appropriateness of the orientation sessions in accordance with their demand. The broad majority of 91% of participants agreed that the facilities of teaching and learning were adequate and sufficient throughout the first academic year.

2.3. Lecturers and Teaching Instructions

In this essential part of the survey, the data collected brought about very encouraging results.

86% of the respondents claimed that lecturers were responsible with the lessons and well-prepared for their teaching in general.

86% thought that lecturers in the Program possessed suitable experience and professional knowledge with the Program.

68% commented on the appropriate teaching methods employed by lecturers in the Program.

81% reported that lecturers often organized classroom activities to excite the lesson.

81% claimed that lecturers are enthusiastic to facilitate students in their learning.

The overall comments on teaching staff were definitely positive, which reflected the high quality and effective teaching methodology of the teachers in the Program.

2.4. Syllabus and Teaching Material

Looking at the coursebook, nearly 60% of the respondents claimed that the textbook is suitable to their level while 35,9% expressed their confusion over the appropriateness of the textbook, which is a worrying point. It's a matter of fact that the beginning level of learners in this Program varied to some extent. Therefore, some students would find the coursebook more challenging than some others. It's advisable for the course designer and managers to carefully study this problem for the coming year. In contrast, the respondents found the consensus over other related issues; for example: self-studying materials can support their home-education, teachers-designed-handouts matched the in-class content and homework workload was appropriate.

2.5. Testing and Assessment

67% of the students claimed to have been provided with sufficient information about testing and assessment at the beginning of the Course. More than 80% agreed that the evaluation process was transparent and unbiased throughout the Course. approximately 70% thought that the evaluation was suitable and effective.

2.6. Overall course evaluation

Generally, the course was evaluated as good and excellent by more than 81% of all the students.

Recommendation

The findings from test-score calculation and survey painted a bright picture and imply a bright prospects for the Intensive English Program for Math-major students at HNUE. However, to further improve the satisfaction and sufficiency of the Program, the authors would propose some following recommendations:

- Some students still had negative comments about some lecturers ⇒ It's advisable to raise teacher's awareness about their attitude and methodology in teaching.
- Some students still have problems with the course book and materials ⇒ It's important that the syllabus and teaching materials should be revised in accordance with the reflections of students.
- The development process of the Program still lacks of the step of need analysis. ⇒ It's necessary for the course manager and designers to carry out the implementation of Need Analysis prior to the Program in the following academic year.

Conclusion

The very first attempts to train teachers of Math in English initiated and developed by Faculty of English, Hanoi National University of Education proved to achieve initial

positive outcomes and feedbacks. All aspects of the course, ranging from orientation activities, facilities and equipment, teaching staff, assessment and evaluation, to course syllabus and teaching materials, were generally appreciated by participants in the Program. This very preliminary evaluation of the Program would hopefully pave the way for further development of the Program not only in the field of Math-majored students but also other science disciplines; not only in Hanoi National University of Education but also nationwide in Vietnam.

Limitations

As noted above, a self-evaluation can lack the objectivity of an evaluation performed by an outside agency. However, the use of quantitative data in combination with the triangulation of data increases the opportunity to gain an objective evaluation. The advantages of an “in-house” evaluation seemed to outweigh those of an independent evaluation.

This study examined the students’ evaluation of the first cohort of students in the intensive language program at HNUE. However, further study is needed; specifically, related research topics may include (1) a formative evaluation of the program at the end of semester four with data from the students’ grade point average GPA scores aligned with the CEFR, involving insider and outsider participants; or (2) document analysis of the program in order to measure to what degree the course is equivalent to the B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference and level 4 in the Vietnamese Framework of Language Competence.

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO COMMON WRITTEN ERRORS COMMITTED BY SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS AT FOE, HNUE

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Abstract

This study is aimed at gaining more insights into written errors committed by the second year students in an English writing class at Faculty of English (FOE), Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE). The participants of the study were 28 second year students including 27 females and one male of one class at FOE, HNUE who had finished the first two terms and a half of the third term. The mid-term test was used as an instrument for collecting data for this study. Errors were identified, classified and evaluated. The results show that there were 6 types of written errors students often made. Errors that participants committed were basically grammatical. Among them the most common errors were: subject-verb agreement, verb form, pluralization, spelling, articles and prepositions. The participants also had a relatively weak vocabulary and their sentences were sometimes incomprehensible. These errors were mainly caused by the interference of learners' native language, carelessness and ignorance of rule restrictions. It is expected that the study will provide useful information on common types of errors including the most common written errors committed by students and the main reasons for causing them, and then present some suggestions for teaching and learning writing.

Introduction

1. Rationale

Writing is one of four skills in language learning process and it is seen as a language skill which is the most difficult and complex because it is required widely perception and needs good understanding on grammar and structures. Nunan (2001) claims that "linguists and educators began studying the specific language learners used as they attempted to communicate in the target language" and that "errors were seen not as evidence of pathology on the part of learners, but as formal and healthy part of learning process." They are not problems to be overcome or evils to be eradicated. They are a part of learning and reveal the strategies that learners use to learn a language. They provide valuable insight into the language learning process.

Being a teacher of English in general and English writing in particular for second year students at FOE, HNUE, I am well aware of the importance and significance of focusing on learners' errors in learning and teaching a language. Therefore, it is necessary to do the research on the written errors to get insights into written problems made by the students to find and draw out the causes and possible solutions to these errors.

The study is supposed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the common written errors committed by second year students at FOE, HNUE?
- How to treat these written errors?

2. Literature review

2.1. Error analysis

Brown (1980, p. 166) states that error analysis is the fact that learner do make errors and that “these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learners”. The purpose is to show some problems faced by the students. It is the key to understand the process of foreign language acquisition. Additionally, according to James (1998, p.7), error analysis is “a methodology for dealing with data” rather than a theory of acquisition. The data can be taken by conducting a test with the students as the respondents. In short, based on the significance of errors, this study is carried by evaluating errors in students’ written tests.

2.2. Sources of error

It is not easy to identify the actual sources of written errors in the fields of English Language Teaching. Different classifications of errors provide us with different perspectives to analyze the causes of errors. Brown (1980) states that errors are caused by the lack of knowledge about the target language. Besides, Richards (1974) claims the source of learners’ errors is the interference from the speakers’ first language. In conclusion, errors can be ascribed to many factors. Some of learners’ errors are due to learners’ language competence, some due to cultural interference; some are results of learners’ learning strategies, while others are the products of communicative strategies; some are classroom induced errors, while others are the results of individual variables.

3. The study

3.1. The methodology

Participants:

The participants of the study were 28 second year students including 27 females and 1 male of one class at FOE, HNUE who had finished the first two terms and a half of the third term. They were all aged between eighteen and twenty.

Data collection instrument and procedure:

The mid-term written exam was used as an instrument for collecting data for this study. During the exam, each participant was requested to write a five-paragraph process essay on a festival or holiday. Then the participants’ written tests were collected for the researcher to check their errors after the exam.

3.2. Findings and discussion

Table 1: Common errors found in the data (N = 28)

Items	Error Types	No of each error	Total number of errors	Percentage (%)
1	Subject-verb agreement	42	215	19.5
2	Verb tense	12	215	5.6
3	Verb form	38	215	17.7
4	Pluralization	25	215	11.6
5	Prepositions	19	215	8.8
6	Articles	24	215	11.2
7	Word order	6	215	2.8
8	Word choice	14	215	6.5
9	Spelling errors	25	215	11.6
10	Capitalization & punctuation	10	215	4.6

Table 2: Frequency of errors

Items	Error Types	No of tests with errors	Total number of tests	Percentage (%)
1	Subject-verb agreement	22	28	78.6
2	Verb tense	5	28	17.9
3	Verb form	21	28	75
4	Pluralization	19	28	68
5	Prepositions	13	28	46.4
6	Articles	23	28	82.1
7	Word order	6	28	21.4
8	Word choice	7	28	25
9	Spelling errors	18	28	64.2
10	Capitalization & punctuation	7	28	25

As can be seen from the tables, there were six types of errors found in the data. Among them the most common errors were: subject-verb agreement, verb form, pluralization, spelling, articles and prepositions.

Firstly, subject-verb agreement is the biggest problem with the students with the biggest number of error (42 errors). For example: *Then everybody say in chorus "Happy New Year"*. Or: *Each member have to follow these steps*. The reason why the students make this error is that there is no difference between verbs in the third person singular and verbs in the third person plural. Besides, it was due to the students' carelessness.

Secondly, in reference to the second type of error, verb form, 21 participants had problems with this type (75%) mainly because of the lack of regular practice using rules of infinitives and gerunds.

Thirdly, 68% of the students committed the error related to pluralization. For example: *After that, people clean the house to welcome every new things will become in the New year*. There is no plural marker for a noun in Vietnamese and sometimes the students wrote the essay carelessly. It is also the reason for committing the fourth type of error, spelling. (E.g. *nowaday, studnt*)

Besides, article error is another common error indicated from the table. For example: *Vietnamese usually come to pagodas to pray for a new happy year* (article omission) and *Food plays a important role in Tet holiday* (incorrect article). These errors seemed to be related to the lack of regular practice and carelessness and the fact that there is no concept of articles in Vietnamese.

Lastly, nearly a half of the students made the error related to prepositions (46.4%). The reason is that there is an interference from the native language.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings and discussion of written errors made by students at FOE, HNUE, the following suggestions will be provided. Teachers should inform students which way the grammatical rules in L2 is different from those in L1, ask students to do more exercises concerning prepositions, articles, verb tense in separate sentences and short paragraphs. Additionally, teachers sometimes can underline the errors, let students peer-correct or correct themselves and check again. Lastly, teachers should notify the type of errors so that students can understand more about their errors and avoid making them latter.

Conclusion

Errors that participants committed were basically grammatical. The participants also had a relatively weak vocabulary and their sentences were sometimes incomprehensible. These errors are mainly caused by the interference of learners' native language, carelessness and ignorance of rule restrictions.

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ANXIETY OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORS AT HNUE AND SUGGESTED MEASURES TO REDUCE ENGLISH LEARNING ANXIETY

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Abstract

Anxiety has been one of the factors which directly influence the outcome of student's English Language Learning. The fact is that students always feel worry about making mistakes in language class and never feel quite sure about themselves or sometimes overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak a foreign language. Especially, they feel nervous when not understand every words the language teacher says. Anxiety, at a certain level, is associated with positive outcomes. It motivates learners to study harder and make stronger efforts to perform better in class (Andrade & Williams, 2009). However, anxiety can be associated with a large number of negative and severe effects to students. This qualitative and quantitative research helps the researcher to understand the rooted reasons that causes her students' poor performance in language class. Also, the results of the article suggest some ideas about some actions to be done by teachers, friends and classmates in order to assist anxious students in their determination to study English in class.

Introduction

Second/ Foreign language learning for such a long time has been a challenging task for many language learners, especially whose majors are not English. Among the factors that affect language learning, anxiety is considered one that influences their performance significantly. One third to one half of students examined reported experiencing debilitating level of anxiety. Learning anxiety can be a “debilitating factor” that prevents learners from showing their full potential. Consequently, they may not be successful in their language learning (Worde, 1998 cited in Zheng, 2008).

Literature review

1. Definition of language learning anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre (1998) defined anxiety as a mixture of feelings, belief and behaviors related to the uniqueness of the process of foreign language learning. Similarly, anxiety is a feeling of worry and emotional reaction that arises while learning or using a second language. According to Andrade & Williams (2009), anxiety can be classified into *trait anxiety* and *state anxiety (situational anxiety)*. The first one is permanent and difficult to get rid of. The second type diminished overtime as the learners get used to the new environment or feel comfortable with the teacher. Therefore, it is less harmful than trait anxiety (Riasati, 2011).

2. Causes and effects of language learning anxiety

2.1. Causes of language learning anxiety

Language anxiety is caused by (a) personal and interpersonal anxiety, (b) learner belief about language learning, (c) instructor beliefs about language learning, (d) instructor-learner interactions, (e) classroom procedures and (f) language testing. Ohata (2005) combined these six categories into three parts:

Socio-psychological issues of language anxiety

Bailey (1983) cited in Ohata (2005) claims that competitive nature of L2 learning can result in anxiety when learners compare themselves to others or to the idealized self-images. Krashen (1981), Price (1991) and Hembree (1998) cited in Ohata (2005) also suggest that anxiety can arise according to one's degree of self-esteem and those who perceive their level of proficiency to be lower than that of others in class are more likely to feel language anxiety.

Learner/ instructor beliefs on language learning and teaching

Gynan (1989) cited in Ohata (2005) reports that students' beliefs in language learning are different. A similar study on learner beliefs by Horwitz (1988) cited in Ohata (2005) also presents various kinds of learner beliefs, which are sometimes "unrealistic" and "erroneous". For example, some learners were concerned about the correctness of their speech in comparison to native-like accent or pronunciation, or native-like fluency can be achieved after two year studying.

Instructor-learner interactions/ classroom procedures

Besides error correcting, Abbasi and Hashemi (2013) added that Language learners would be less anxious and stressful in environments that emphasize collaborative activities among the teachers and the students. He was agreed by Riasati (2011) that sense of inferiority complex while talking to someone higher in status may cause stress and anxiety and lack of confidence in one's linguistic competence makes one feel inferior and apprehensive to communicate with someone having full command on language, e.g. native speaker.

2.2. Effects of anxiety on language learning

Anxiety, at a certain level, is associated with positive outcomes. It motivates learners to study harder and make stronger efforts to perform better in class (Andrade & Williams, 2009). However, anxiety can be associated with a large number of negative and severe effects to students, Riasati (2011) put that language learning anxiety can influence their learning in general and their fluency of speech in particular, or caused problems such as reduced word productions and difficulty in understanding spoken instructions, negatively

affect their willingness to communicate in language classrooms. Besides, as mentioned by Andrade & Williams (2009), the outcomes can be classified as physical, psychological, or social in such ways as inappropriate silence, unwillingness to participate, absenteeism, and withdrawal from the course.

Methodology

37 first-year students at different faculties at HNUE who studied English since grade 6, only 5 of whom studied English since grade 3 involved in this research. The study employed mainly qualitative method with the combination of quantitative methods. Two research instruments utilized are questionnaire and students' interview.

1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire based on the one designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) includes 33 statements falling into five different categories: English language learning anxiety in general, Test anxiety, Classroom anxiety, Friends, Teacher correction & feedback with Likert scale: Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The questionnaires were translated into Vietnamese.

The questionnaires were collected and analyzed according to the scale:

Strongly Agree (SA) : 1 point

Agree (A) : 2 points

Neutral (N) : 3 points

Disagree (D) : 4 points

Strongly disagree (SD) : 5 points

$$\text{Means (M)} = \frac{\text{Total points of each}}{37}$$

- $M < 3$: More Students agree with the statements.
- $M \geq 3$: More Students disagree with the statements.

2. Interview

Five students from the students conducting questionnaire were chosen randomly to interview. They were 4 females and 1 male and were questioned about their own ways to reduce anxiety, friends' assistance in reducing LLA, teachers' assistance in reducing LLA.

Findings and discussion

1. Findings from the questionnaires

English language learning anxiety in general

1	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	3.49
2	I never feel quite sure of my self when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	1.97
3	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.43
4	I feel nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	2.34

The fact is that students always feel worry about making mistakes in language class and never feel quite sure about themselves or sometimes overwhelmed by the number of rules they have to learn to speak a foreign language. Especially, they feel nervous when not understand every words the language teacher says.

Test anxiety

1	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	3.97
2	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	2.35

The majority of students disagree with the statement: "I am usually at ease during tests in my language class." and worry about the consequences of failing foreign language class.

Classroom anxiety

1	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.67
2	I get nervous when teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	2.3
3	Even if I am well-prepared for my English class, I feel anxious about it.	2.45

Not all students feel confident when speak English in class and a number of them even have some behaviors like get nervous or tremble and panic when being called. Even when students are well-prepared for English class, they still feel anxious about it.

Friends

1	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	2.38
2	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	2.57
3	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.73

Students can be afraid that the other students are better than them and worried about being laughed at by other students and being left behind.

Teachers

1	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	2.27
2	I get upset when I don't understand what teacher is correcting.	2.35
3	I'm afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	3.48

Students are afraid that they cannot understand what teachers say in English or what teachers are correcting. However, they are willing to listen to teachers' correcting their mistakes.

2. Findings from the interview

What students do to reduce their anxiety?

When asked about what they do to reduce their language learning anxiety, the researcher received different responses from students. Student A stated that she learnt new words and grammar and Student B was well-prepared for the class at home. Student D mentioned not to feel nervous and she took extra English course.

What friends can help?

Student B & E shared the same ideas when asked about this topic. "When I don't understand anything, I will ask my friends". I see my friends are better at English than me, so I have more motivation to learn English to catch up with them." Student C added different idea: "I like working in pair with my friend, but most of the time, I work with only one student because we are learning English in credit class so I don't know many friends, the class is crowded and I cannot move. So sometimes I find it quite boring."

What teachers can help?

Student A complemented that her teachers were close to her class members, created relaxing environment in class. However, she wished teachers could create more fun activities. Besides, Teachers gave her classmates praises so that she felt more confident in herself. Student C emphasized that my teachers did not put a lot of marking pressure on her and her classmates, so they do not have to copy their friends to get high score in the test.

In short, a number of findings about students' attitudes towards their language learning anxiety and how they themselves, friends and teachers could relieve this stress and improve their language learning are illustrated as above.

Conclusion and implications for teaching context at HNU

In conclusion, apparently, anxiety has some positive effects on language learning. Besides, anxiety can cause negative effects as a burden for students. It is necessary for some actions to be done to assist the anxious students in their determination to study English in class.

- Acknowledge students' anxious feelings and inform them that anxiety is a widespread situation among language students.
- Encourage students to successfully use language with communicative purpose rather than grammatical and pronunciation accuracy.
- Make use of pair/group work to give students practice in different activities before asking them to perform individually.
- Design lesson plans with the increasing level of difficulty to set the students at the most comfortable emotion to study.
- Base on process-oriented evaluation rather than result-oriented evaluation to lessen the test anxiety.
- Create a friendly atmosphere in class, increase the interaction in target language among friends and between teachers and students.

These are among a number of possible implications that can be implemented in foreign language teaching. If teacher can put themselves in the situation of their students, they can apply these strategies the most effectively.

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EMPOWERING STUDENTS IN AN ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASS WITH THREAT-FREE ENVIRONMENT AND LECTURER'S MINIMIZED ROLE

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Abstract

The teacher's central role as a lecturer in lessons of literature, especially in a second language, is a commonly accepted norm. However, we argue that literature in a second language can be taught in a learner-centered manner. In this presentation, we describe a lesson of literature in the English language in which the teacher functioned as a facilitator of discussions on the points which would have been conventionally lectured to them; there was no right-wrong judgements of the arguments raised, and rewards were given to open speakers. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis show that creating a threat-free environment and empowering students as the center of their learning process have positive effects on students's motivation and learning process. Stimulated by the discussion points that were either paradoxical or mind-tricking, being assured that neither the teacher nor their classmates would criticize their argument unconstructively, almost all of the students in the literature class enthusiastically expressed themselves, listened to their peers' viewpoints, and reflected on their response to the literary work of concern. The research results suggest that with certain changes in classroom managements, teachers of literature can help students build up their self-confidence and simultaneously develop their skills of communication as well as critical and creative thinking.

Keywords: literature lesson, open attitude, empowering, classroom management, communication skill, critical skill

As a teacher who organizes literature in the English language for Vietnamese students, I have experienced and seen numerous lessons where the lecturer is the lonely speaker among the students who passively listen and take notes. I can sense among many students of mine the thought that the subject of literature is beyond their head, that there is hardly any way they can enjoy themselves and develop the skills to interpret a literary work. In other words, I have experienced and seen low motivation and little self-confidence numerous students.

My hypothesis is this is the result of two factors: (1) the lack of self-confidence among the students partially caused by the traditional approach of teacher-center; (2) their weak skills of critical thinking and communication.

I assume that if the students are encouraged to look into themselves with respect and tolerance, they will begin to grow more confident; and if they find the classroom a safe

place, they will communicate their thinking with others, then grow “brave” enough to view themselves critically. With more confidence, more communication, more critical awareness of themselves, they will hopefully learn more enthusiastically and more effectively.

I did three things. (1) I made my students recall their initial reading of the literary work when they prepared for the lesson at home. They would have ten minutes to free-write their initial response to the work. Following this free-writing activity would be a 10- minute discussion in which they are to find out those with similar or same response as they did. (2) And after that, I would organize discussions rather than lecturing. The discussion would centers around the points that I have splitted up from the lecture content, and my students were encouraged to express their agreement of disagreement on those points. (3) To encourage them to talk, I created a safe and friendly atmosphere by refraining from right/wrong judgments, and I gave some small presents to the students who could find the largest number of those who share the same viewpoint/ interpretation with him/her.

Among these three intervention techniques, the most difficult one was the first: free-writing about the students’ initial interpretation. In the first two lessons, many students would just sit there, they could not write or would not write, I could not decide. They said that they had no interpretation, that they could not understand the work. And I saw the lack of self-confidence in their eyes. I had to encourage them, I even told them that it was OK to find the story difficult to understand, it was OK to dislike the story or the characters, and it was OK to dislike the message they thought that they could sense through the story.

In the second and the third lesson, I even had to organize a competition to find out the person with who negatively responded to the story but had a sound justification for that negative response. And I gave some small presents to the winner.

To test the student’s enthusiasm with the discussion activities, I video-taped the lesson. To test the effectiveness of this student-centered approach, I made my students write a reflection of the lesson they have just got. So I have two sources of data beside my own observation as a teacher.

Following are the results of the interventions I have done to my literature classes.

From my own observation as a teacher, the student’s shyness and fear quickly faded off after several lessons. They became more and more confident talking about their initial response. Many of them even openly talked about things they could not understand rather than keeping silence. Stimulated by the discussion points that were either paradoxical or mind-tricking, being assured that neither the teacher nor their classmates would criticize their argument unconstructively, almost all of the students in the literature class enthusiastically expressed themselves and listened to their peers.

The video tape of the lessons showed that only one student showed little interest in the discussions.

The qualitative data taken from the written reflection that my students wrote about a particular lesson is as follow.

- i. 95% of the students wrote that they themselves found their initial interpretation shallow and changed it.
- ii. 20% acknowledge that they could not either understand the work, or appreciate it in their first reading at home.
- iii. 80% attached their better, new interpretation with discussion with their friends and reading the story again under the teacher's guidance.
- iv. 5 % (02 students) wrote that they did not change their interpretation, and gave sound justifications for their viewpoint.

With the above finding, it is possible to come to the following concluding points:

- i. A threat-free environment with open attitude from the teacher can help reduce the student's anxiety, and increase their confidence. Anxiety and confidence have been identified as influential to learners' motivation in the learning process.
- ii. Empowering students by minimizing the lecturer's role in literature class is beneficial. It helps students to develop critical thinking skills by reflecting on their own initial response. It also provides opportunities for them to developing their communication skills though discussions. Most of all, it empowers the students as the centre of their learning process, thus further boosts their self-confidence.

Without the anxiety caused by the fear of being criticized, with the confidence that they can interpret literary works themselves if they make efforts, my students appeared more confident during the lesson time and improved their skills. As a teacher, I enjoyed seeing the happiness and confidence in their eyes beside their motivation for the class-room activities. As a researcher, I am glad to see my hypothesis being confirmed.

The success of this small action research suggests that student-centered approach can be applied to literature lessons if the teacher adopts an open attitude, if the classroom environment contains few threats to learners' face value, and if the students (rather than the lecturer) are empowered to be the decision makers of their own learning process.

An open attitude contains a respect for students as particular readers with their specific life experience, background knowledge, values and belief imprinted on them by the contemporary development of life. This respect will enable the teacher to see what lies behind the students' particular response and interpretation, and thus he/she will not find it proper to give right/wrong judgment to the students' interpretation of the work concerned. Once the teacher keeps this open attitude, and manages class proceedings in a way that suits this understanding, the students will find it safe to express themselves freely, and confidently.

Empowering students means creating favorable conditions for them to reflect critically on their own current intellectual state, perception of the world, values and belief; then encouraging them to share their view with peers, and finally provide them with the freedom to decide how far they want to go, and which direction to turn into with the intellectual experience we provide them with through the discussion of each literary work. In other words, empowering students means allowing the students to develop from their own individual starting point with the speed that suits them the most into the direction that interests them the most. In literature class, this can be done by minimizing lecturing, by splitting lecture content into small points, turn those points into challenging, mind-twisting statements that can excite students into re-viewing their initial interpretation of the literary work of concern, then discovering new dimensions of the work.

From particular starting points, with various learning styles, student would improve their skills, knowledge, and intellectual maturity at their own speed within the same length of time which is the class-time. And we teachers should accept and respect that. It is by no means proper to expect all a to see a particular work in the same way with all other students, and with the teacher.

With this in mind, with certain class-room management techniques, students will be able to develop their critical and communication skills side by side with their knowledge.

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EVALUATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS THROUGH ROLE-PLAY FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The issue of the English Teacher Competency Framework for Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs (Pre-service ETCF) within the scope of The National English Project 2020 by MOET has set Level C1 as described in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) the targeted language proficiency of graduates of English Pre-service Teacher Education Programs nationwide. In order to achieve this target, comprehensive innovations should be fostered in terms of both the curriculum and pedagogy in accordance with the description of the Common Reference Levels from A1 to C1. This study scrutinizes the efficiency of the teaching and learning of English language functions in 02 English Modules 1A and 2A through role play in the academic year 2014 - 2015 with the participation of 210 first-year students in the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU, HN). The findings reveal the levels of effectiveness of the teaching and learning of these language functions as perceived by students, as well as the reasons for the success and limitations of the pedagogy employed.

Keywords: language function, speaking skill, role play, CEFR

Introduction

Role-play (also roleplaying) can be defined as an in-class activity used in language classes in which students play the role of different agents in a situation and act out what they think might actually happen in that situation. In doing so, new vocabulary, structures and expressions are encouraged to be extensively practiced and hence language acquisition takes place. Take, for instance, to learn how to describe symptoms and illnesses in a foreign language, two students would role-play a situation in which a patient goes to see a doctor. In a lesson, each student might be given a number of roles in different situations so that he can acquire a good use of new language function(s) targeted (Hymes, 1977). Role-play has long been employed in communicative approach albeit this pedagogy has been viewed differently by different people since this practice faces the question of being fictional and scripted. This pedagogy emphasizes the communicative competence of language learners as it fosters learners to speak and encourages more improvisational, learner-generated, and meaningful communication amongst learners, hence it has been widely employed particularly in the affluence age of communicative approach in the 1980s (Paulston et al., 1975, Ladousse, 1987).

The pedagogy of role-play had been so pervasive by the mid-1980s that its presence could be found in almost all class activities and projects. Early scholarship advocates both linguistic and affective advantages of this practice as it facilitates the acquisition of vocabulary, grammatical structures as well as learners' spontaneity. Role-play has also been viewed as a means to trigger and nurture students' creativity, engagement, confidence to speak, and motivation to learn languages (Ladousse, 1987; Magos & Politi, 2008). This pedagogy, however, gradually lost its status in the 1990s as strong criticisms began to emerge. The strongest criticism against role-play, as claimed by Al-Arishi (1994, cited in Shapiro & Leopold, 2012) is that it often "results in surreal-play rather than real-play" (p.339). Other social sciences, however, still appealed to role-play as noted in a body of scholarship in sociology, psychology and economics. In natural sciences and professional areas such as nursing, role-play is seen to help students gain insights into the expectations and experiences of patients. Across disciplines, such as in history and politics, role-play is employed to gain a more critical understanding of "complex, multi-layered historical scenario". Role-play is also claimed to help learners better understand course material and objectives, especially in teaching English in communicative approach (Shapiro & Leopold, 2012).

As claimed by Richards, C. et al., (1992), communicative competence is a two-folded ability: first, learners should be able to form grammatically correct sentences based on their knowledge of grammatical rules; second, they must know when, where and to whom their utterances are given. Communicative competence includes:

- i. knowledge of the language grammar and lexical resource
- ii. knowledge of social communication rules (e.g. knowing how to start and finish conversations, knowing what topics and what address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different circumstances)
- iii. knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts, such as offers, orders, warnings, and advice
- iv. knowing how to use language appropriately

TESOL in ULIS, VNU in the context of The National English Project 2020

The issue of the English Teacher Competency Framework for Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs (Pre-service ETCF) within the scope of The National English Project 2020 by MOET has set Level C1 as described in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) the targeted language proficiency of graduates of English Pre-service Teacher Education Programs nationwide. In order to achieve this target, comprehensive innovations should be fostered in terms of both the curriculum and pedagogy in accordance with the description of the Common Reference Levels from A1 to C1.

In the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education (FELTE), University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), students have 08 fundamental English Modules in their first two years at university, namely Social English 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A alongside with Academic English 1B, 2B, 3B and 4B. The starting level of the freshmen is A1 and the students are expected to reach one level higher after each module. Specifically, the students should reach level A2/A2+ (Waystage) after Social English 1A and B1/B1+ (Threshold) after Social English 2A.

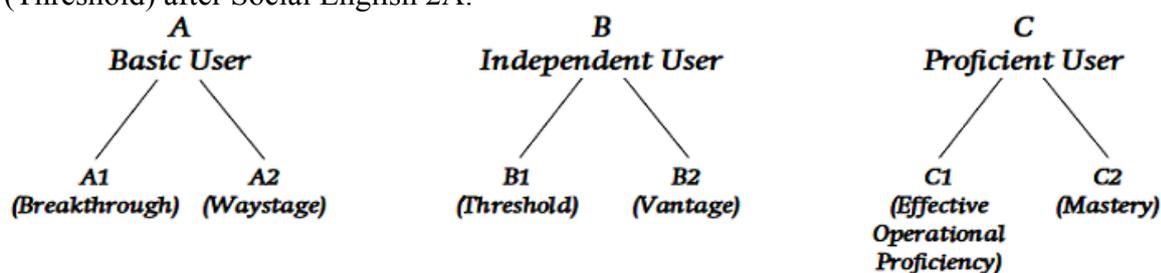


Figure 1. Six broad levels in the Common European Framework of Reference

The self-assessment for speaking skill as described in the Common Reference Levels focuses on two aspects: Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production. From Level A1 to A2, students are expected to be able to communicate in familiar social situations and with familiar acquaintances. From Level A2 to B1, students should be able to enter without preparation into familiar topics and deal with most situations arising while travelling, as well as using simple phrases to describe, reason, explain, or narrate a story.

		A1	A2	B1
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions

Figure 2. Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid

Methodology

This study was conducted to examine the efficiency of the teaching and learning of English language functions in 02 English Modules 1A and 2A through role play in the academic year 2014 - 2015 with the participation of 210 first-year students (N=210) in the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS). The research questions were:

1. Do the students have confidence in applying 22 language functions they have learnt in real-life communication, and to what extent?
2. What are the possible reasons for their confidence in applying these language functions in real-life communication?
3. What are the possible reasons for their lack of confidence in applying these language functions in real-life communication?
4. Overall, does the teaching and learning of language functions in English Modules 1A and 2A help students develop their communicative competence, and to what extent?

Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with the participants. The questionnaires and interviews were delivered in the final week of English Speaking Module 2A to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the response of the participants.

Findings and Discussion

1. Research question 1

The data revealed that 41% of the students felt confident in applying the learnt language functions in real-life communication; 6% of which had complete confidence and could easily apply what they had learnt in real life. The same proportion of 41% of the students said they had confidence but would still feel awkward in real situations. Less than one-fifth of the correspondents (17%) admitted that they lack confidence, and only a modest 1% lacked confidence completely.



Figure 3. Students' ability to apply 22 learnt language functions in real-life communication after studying

So what language functions did the students have confidence in and what did they have not? As shown by the statistics, the five language functions which students felt most confident in were those involving talking about themselves, their needs, and opinions, which were:

(1) *Making simple requests and offers* (131/210);

(2) *Making polite requests* (130/210);

Talking about yourself (120/210);

Agreeing and Disagreeing (110/210);

and *Finding out information* (99/210).

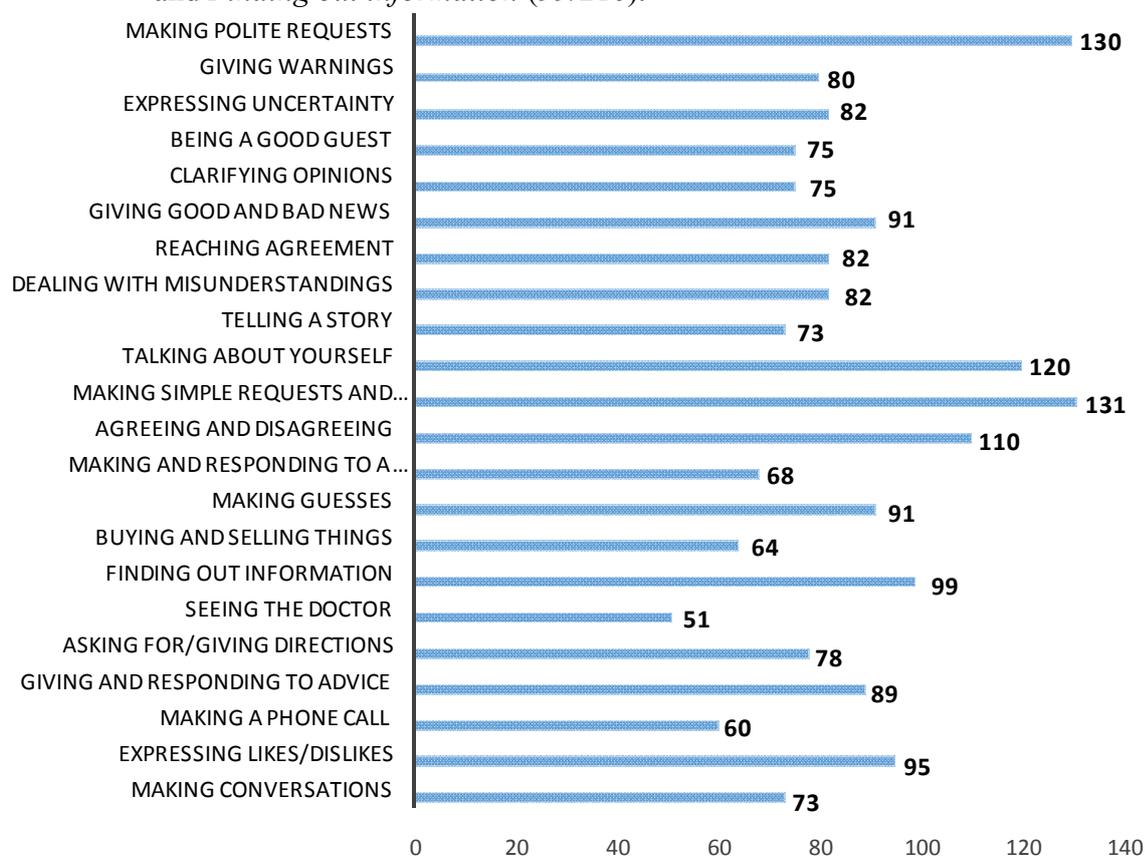


Figure 4. List of language functions which students have confidence in applying in real-life communication

On the contrary, the two language functions which students found the most difficult to use in real-life situations were those that occur in unfamiliar social circumstances, which were:

(1) *Seeing the doctor* (74/210) and *Being a good guest* (52/210), followed by *Asking for/giving directions* (50/210); *Making a phone call* (47/210); and *Making and responding to a complaint* (47/210) albeit these situations were rather common in real life.

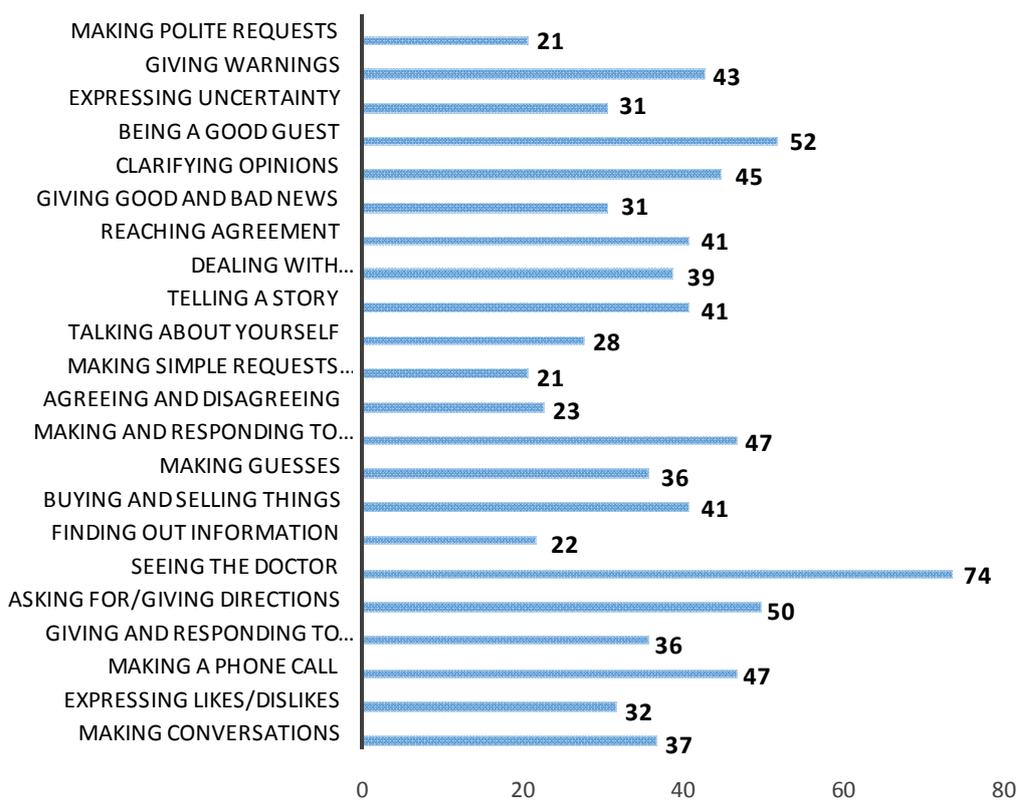


Figure 5. List of language functions which students lack of confidence in applying in real-life communication

In between the two extremes lay the functions which students could use in real communication but still felt awkward. The situations involving these functions were rather familiar nevertheless, which were:

- (1) *Buying and selling things* (106/210);
- (2) *Making a phone call* (105/210);
- Making conversation* (99/210);
- Expressing uncertainty* (99/210);
- and *Telling a story* (96/210).

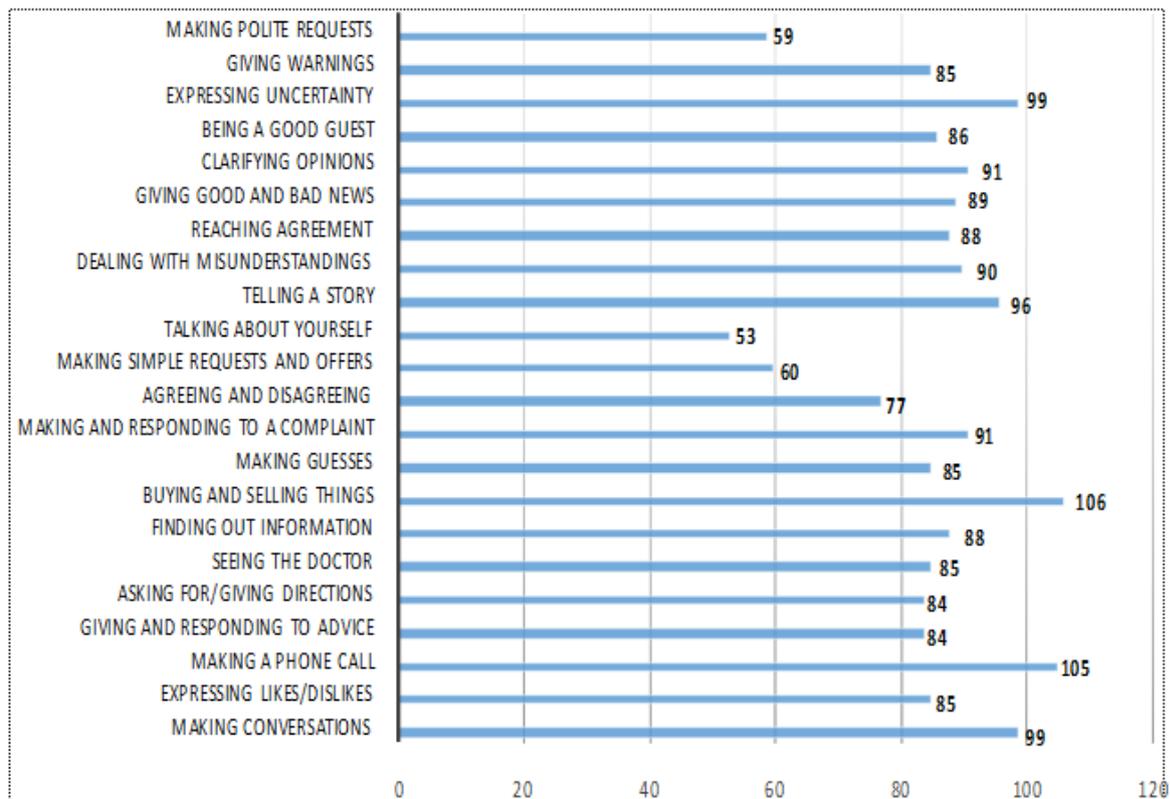


Figure 6. List of language functions which students still feel awkward in applying in real-life communication

2. Research question 2

The reasons underlying the students' confidence in these language functions came from all parties involved: the students, the teachers, the teaching pedagogy (role-play), and the language functions per se. Ranking in the first place was the reason coming from the language functions, in which more than half of the students (52.4%) confided that they felt confident because these functions were useful for their own life. The teacher was also shown to play a critical role in fostering students' ability to use these functions, as the more intriguing the lessons were, the better they could learn (46.2%). Students also highly appreciated teachers who could motivate them to speak (45.2%) and give them interesting and close-to-real-life situations to role play (38.6%). Moreover, students' intrinsic motivation to learn, opportunities to practice in real-life situations and sufficient time for role-play practice in-class were also remarkable factors in their confidence, accounting for 28.1% and 19% respectively. Other reasons comprised a modest proportion of 1.4%, showing that almost all factors contributing to their confidence were revealed in the study.

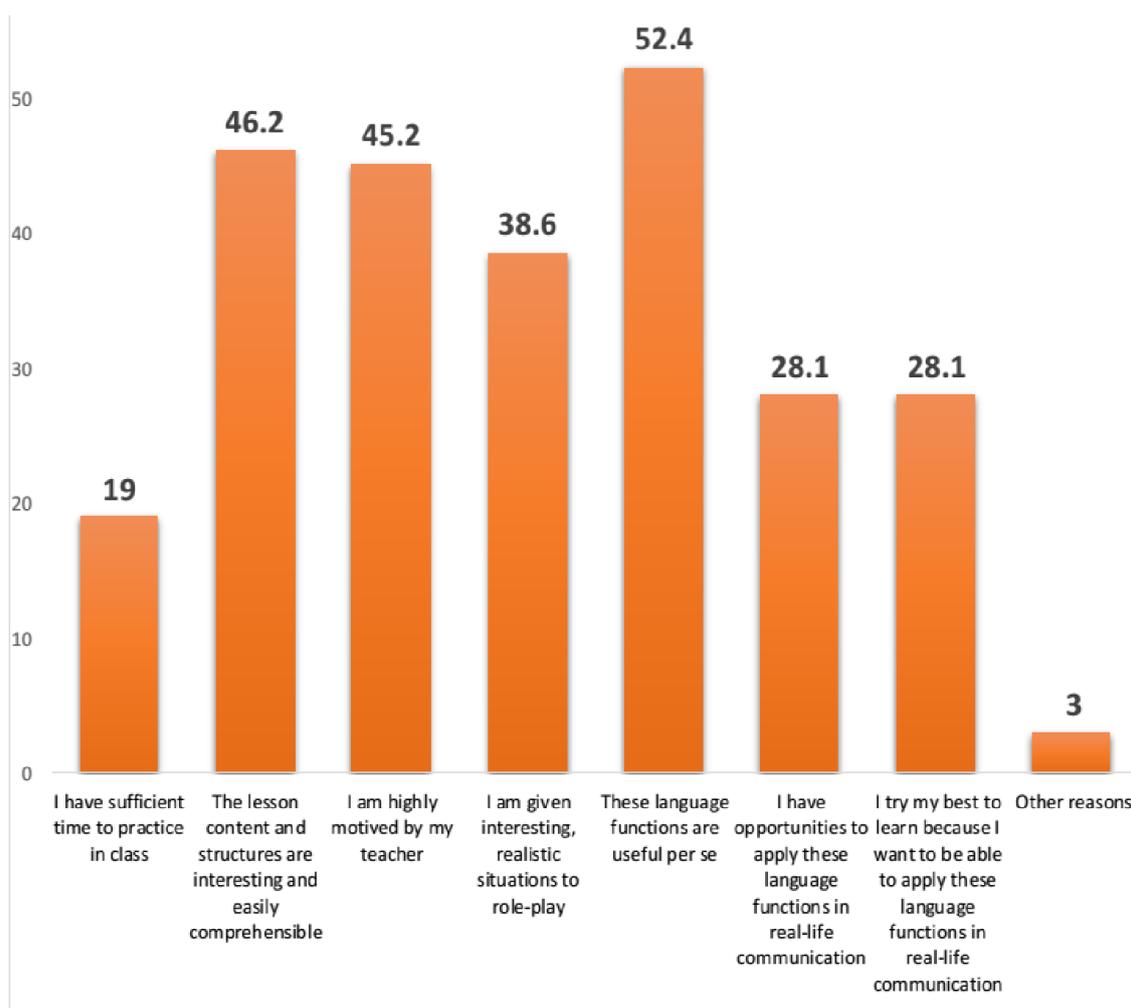


Figure 7. Reasons why students have confidence in applying learnt language functions in real-life communication

3. Research question 3

Students attributed their lack of confidence to a number of both subjective and objective factors. The most deciding factor contributing to their lack of confidence was the lack of opportunities to practice in real life (64%), followed by insufficient time for role-play practice (31%), dull and fictional role-play situations (18.1%), and teacher's lack of encouragement (16.7%). Other contributing factors derived from students' lack of intrinsic motivation (14.3%), the difficulty of the language functions per se (11.4%) and the lesson content (6.2%). Other reasons accounted for only 5.2%.

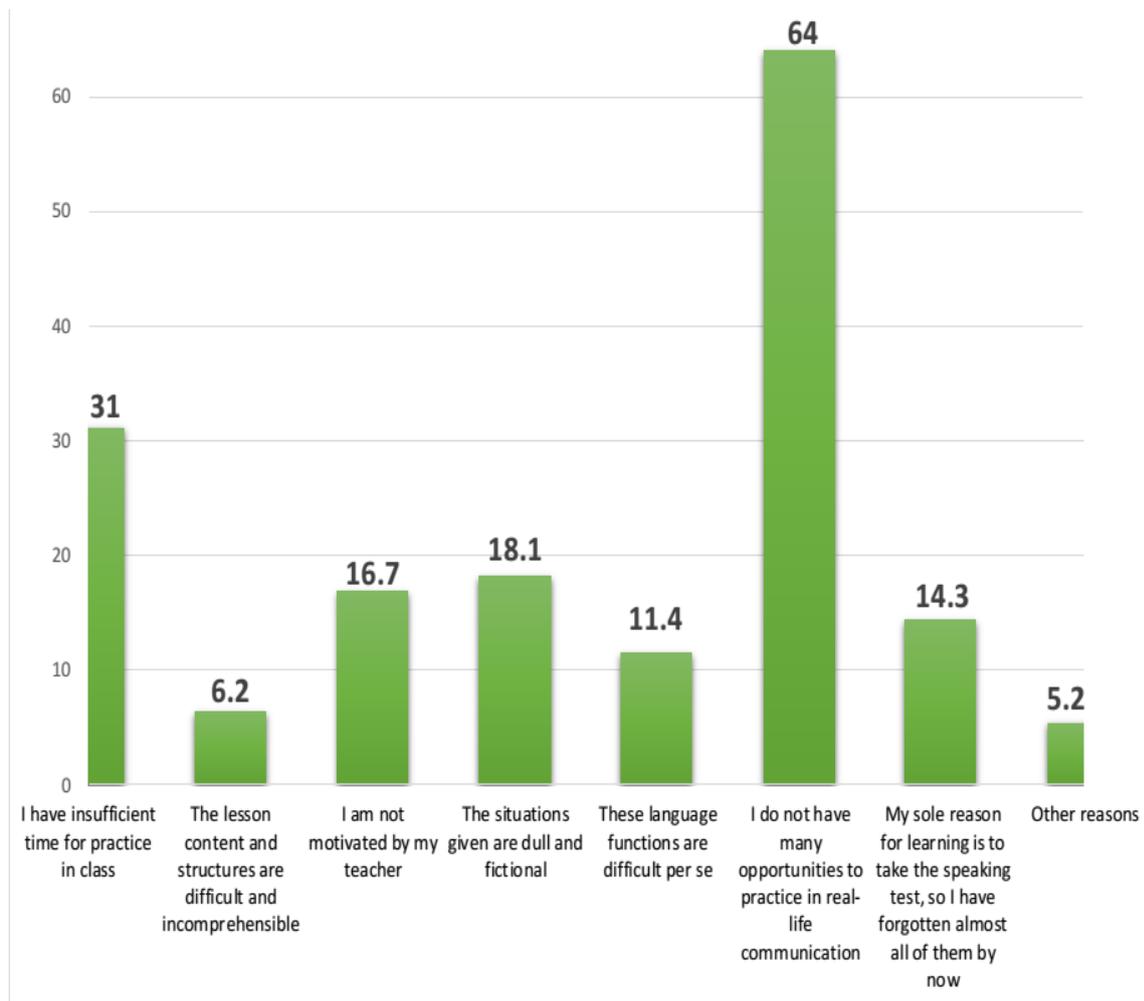


Figure 8. Reasons why students lack confidence in applying learnt language functions in real-life communication

4. Research question 4

As revealed by the data collected, the majority of students highly appreciated the benefits of the pedagogy of role-play. First, it encouraged students' creativity, a crucial part of their affective development (88%). Secondly, it helps develop their linguistic competence in terms of grammar and lexical resource (80%), knowledge of communication (82%), understanding of communication rules (82%), and knowledge of how to use language appropriately (76%).

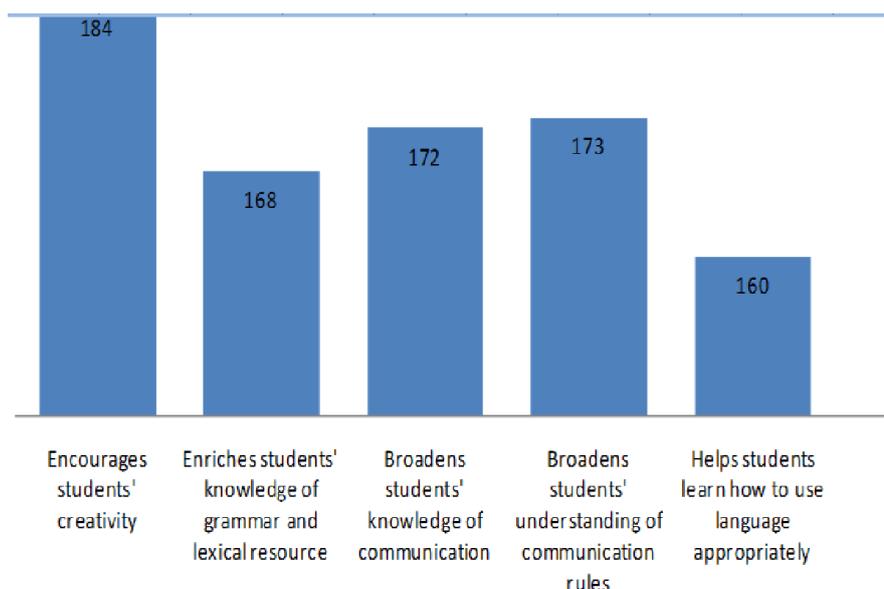


Figure 9. Effectiveness of role-play in the teaching and learning of language functions as perceived by students

Conclusion

As stated above, the present study aimed at the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of 22 language functions through the pedagogy of role-play in ULIS, VNU. According to the obtained results, the majority of the students had confidence in these language functions, which meant that the employment of role-play was fruitful and productive.

The positive results revealed that role-play was highly suitable for a CEFR-driven curriculum as it helped students develop both spoken interaction and spoken production skills towards the description in CEFR levels. It could be seen that these 22 language functions primarily aimed at the students' desired speaking competence as shown in the level descriptions for Level A2/A2+ and B1/B1+. Henceforth, it could be suggested as a promising pedagogy for English practitioners worldwide who also pursue CEFR levels.

The reasons underlying the students' both confidence and awkwardness in these language functions derived from a number of factors, both objective and subjective. It is, however, noteworthy that the factors coming from the language functions per se, the teacher, the student, the pedagogy and the sufficient amount of time for practice as well as opportunities to practice in real life were the most crucial ones.

The pedagogy of role-play in this research was once again confirmed to be effective in communicative approach, as it helped learners develop all aspects of communicative competence. However, role-play could only remain effective if it was intriguing and challenging enough, both linguistically and cognitively as shown in the responses of the correspondents. Hence, whether this practice could bring about desired outcome or not crucially depends on the teacher.

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USING COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH ESP MATERIALS IN A COURSE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study conducted among a large group of senior law students at People's Police University (PPU) in Vietnam to analyze the effects of applying reading through English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials under the criteria of the communicative approach. The purposes of this study are to demonstrate how specialized ESP reading materials help students gain a deeper knowledge of their own field of study, to promote students' use of English for debating law topics, and to increase the students' acquisition of vocabulary in the foreign language through reading specialized texts. So, there are 4 research questions: What might be the effects of applying reading through ESP materials by using the communicative approach to a group of senior students from the law enforcement course at PPU, Ho Chi Minh City? In what way does reading under ESP materials help students to gain better knowledge of their own field of study? How does reading under ESP texts enable students to discuss topics of law? How does reading about topics of law contribute to students' acquisition of specialized vocabulary? Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, the students' oral and written samples and the researcher's journals. Findings show that reading ESP materials motivate students to increase both vocabulary and knowledge about their own field of study and also encourages them to use English in everyday situations.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, communicative approach, reading comprehension

Introduction

All students and professionals around the world feel a need to learn English to be competitive in their studies and in their careers because it popularizes rapid globalization. In addition, we are living the age of specializations. People are experts in different fields of knowledge; the best way to obtain such knowledge is through being familiar with different languages, especially English because it is one of the most commonly used languages around the world. About this issue, according Butler-Pascoe (2009) "Today with the emergence of English as the prominent language in our increasingly technological and global society, the study of ESP has assumed a sense of urgency, especially in countries that are attempting to restructure the manner in which students learn and perform English."

The previous statement encourages teachers to think about the possibility of including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a tool for students who want to delve deeper into specific fields of knowledge and who want to improve their abilities in the foreign language.

As a teacher at PPU, I have seen students interested in working in such varied careers as law, investigation, and other fields, which is what motivated me to conduct my research with a group of senior students in the law enforcement course at PPU, following the criteria of the descriptive case study.

Implementing ESP materials under the parameters of the communicative approach allowed students to practice reading as the primary activity that motivated them to find more information of interest. At the same, they had the opportunity to develop other skills, such as listening to their partners, talking about common topics, discussing and arguing according to their own thinking, and writing their own summaries and opinions from the readings.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of applying reading through ESP materials by using the communicative approach, with a group of senior students at PPU who are at the A2 level of English to help them gain a deeper knowledge of their own field of study, to encourage students' use of English for debating topics which relate to law enforcement, and to increase the students' acquisition of vocabulary in the foreign language through reading texts in ESP materials.

From the purposes above, there are 4 research questions in this study: What might be the effects of applying reading through ESP materials by using the communicative approach to a group of senior students from the law enforcement course at PPU, Ho Chi Minh City? In what way does reading under ESP materials help students to gain better knowledge of their own field of study? How does reading under ESP texts enable students to discuss topics of law? How does reading about topics of law contribute to students' acquisition of specialized vocabulary?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

1. Background and Characteristics of ESP

ESP might be described as a specific branch of English as a foreign language assisting the training of students in specific areas, Anthony (2007) points out that English can be used in academic studies or the teaching of English for travel or professional purposes, which represents a population of professionals who are involved in their own fields of study; hence, they need to delve deep into specific topics, and the ESP approach can be useful as a learning methodology.

At the same time, Gatehouse (2001) notes that ESP is not only a learning approach but also a means of development because it allows students to gain the knowledge they need to face the world in a productive way.

The characteristics of ESP create a true picture of its fundamental nature and its benefits for guiding teachers in the implementation of this approach in the classroom. Dudley-

Evans & St. John (1998), and Strevens (1988) defined and presented 3 absolute characteristics (learners' specific needs; use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline; centering on the language with grammar, lexis, register) and 4 variable characteristics (designed for specific disciplines, used in specific teaching situations, designed for adult learners or professional work situations, assumed some basic knowledge of the language system). So, English teachers use an ESP approach as the basis of their syllabus, taking into account the learners' needs, the reasons for learning and also the students' personal specialized knowledge, such as using English for communication.

2. Reading and ESP as a Communicative Approach

Anthony (1997) argues that reading is relevant because it provides learners with the vocabulary and the knowledge that will be used in their professions; accordingly, many educational institutions have adopted ESP reading materials as the basis of their curricula. The goal of reading is to obtain information one needs for specific or personal purposes; thus, reading comprehension involves understanding, decoding, and constructing meaning from a text and reading through a process.

The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning a language successfully comes from communicating "real" meaning; thus, when learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition are being used, which facilitates their learning to use the language. Accordingly, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) note: "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning," which means that when the teacher takes into account the students' disciplines to guide class activities, the students are conscious of their process of learning and the importance of learning another language.

3. ESP Materials

ESP materials are another important aspect of reading comprehension. Accordingly, Torregrosa and Sanchez-Reyes (2011) state that "authentic ESP materials are important tools to use in ESP classes." Thus, authentic ESP materials permit students not only to have real communication but also to exhibit their language skills and improve their background knowledge as a tool for use in their fields and daily lives.

Methods

1. Participants

Forty senior students in the course for law enforcement D23S at the People's Police University were selected to participate in this study. The researcher informed the students about the development of this study and received permission from each student in a signed format, as well as from the directors of the university. The site of the research was set at

the People's Police University, the researcher's workplace. It is one of the biggest universities and is located in District 7 of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The PPU trains their students to become police officers who work for the official organization that is responsible for protecting people and property, making people obey the law, solving crimes, and catching people who have committed a crime. The PPU provides graduate and postgraduate levels of jurisprudence for the police force in Vietnam.

2. Research procedures and instruments for data collection

This program promoted the reading of specialized texts under ESP materials and the communicative approach to enhance students' analysis and discussion about law topics of their respective fields of study. There were four procedures, which were carried out during English classes. In the first, the researcher presented the project to students and explained the benefits of participating with regard to experience and knowledge acquisition. In the second, researcher provided a bank of law texts (including authentic ESP documents and books) which was gathered from the library. In the third, the researcher explained to students, by way of examples, the processes of reading (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading) and the reading techniques to be used throughout the project. Then, the researcher asked students to read specialized texts and prepare presentations (written and oral); sometimes they had to read extra information to defend their position in front of the group or the teacher. Moreover, they had to be ready to answer questions that clarified their viewpoints. Finally, the topics that generated discussion and analysis among the students included: criminal law, international law, human rights, the consumption of drugs, crime scenes, and crime and the justice system in other countries.

Instruments for data analysis in this study are semi-structured interviews, students' oral and written samples, and the researchers' journals. The reasons the researcher chose the semi-structured interviews is that it encourages a relaxed relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee; moreover, this method provides information about students' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, and it contributes to understanding the research participants' perspectives or experiences. Accordingly, Silverman (1993) states, "Semi-structured interviews are conducted based on relevant topics that generate specific questions, which means that not all of the questions are designed before the interview; most of the questions are asked during the interview according to the interviewee's answers." Students' oral and written samples are products of students' work performed in class during the reading sessions. In this study, journals include the teacher's written responses to teaching events. The journals serve to record principal aspects that emerge from the processes of teaching and learning. Burns (2003) notes the following: "Journals provide continuing accounts or perceptions and thought processes, as well as of critical events or issues which have surfaced in the classroom." In this research, teachers' journals are used for obtaining written registers about students' work during reading activities and also to reveal the students' capacities for solving problems and making decisions about their own fields of study.

Finding and discussion

The process of data analysis was as follows: The researcher collected the students' written samples, and the students were then supervised in order to identify the use of specialized vocabulary and the management of knowledge about law. The researcher's journal contained the description of all class activities from February to May. The semi-structured interviews were applied to students during the months of May and June, and they included the students' impressions about the development of this research according to the questions asked previously by the researcher. After analyzing all the information, it was necessary to triangulate the data.

From the students' comments, we can infer that the readings used in class had motivated students' acquisition of knowledge and helped them to understand specific aspects of other countries' legislation, which is meaningful to all students. One of the students discussed this issue, as follows: "This reading has helped me understand the regionalisms from other countries and laws that are used abroad; there are things that we can relate to our country." (Interview, Q 2, S 2).

The researcher observed how students reacted to the texts about other countries law; as a result, the students felt that this type of reading was interesting for them because they could compare and analyze the pros and cons between Vietnamese and the other Constitutions. These topics motivated the students to investigate additional information for their own edification, which generated a reading culture in English that manifested in a spontaneous way as the result of the research activities.

As the researcher noted in the journal: During reading, students were engaged in acquiring information in their own field of study within the context of the United States, such as penal justice, the organization of the government, types of crimes, and the consumption of drugs and punishments, among others.

Additionally, we can see how our students, friends, and people in general build their own schema or prior knowledge through time according to their personal experiences of learning; this information becomes meaningful in the reading process when readers link their previous knowledge with new knowledge, which in turn permits wider comprehension. One student discussed this issue in the interview: "I think it is very interesting because it is strengthening our own field of study and our profession; it is helping us to delve into the topics of our interest, especially this semester because we have seen a lot of vocabulary; the readings have been connected to the issues we are learning about." (Interview, Q 2, S 7)

Moreover, we can see that students used their prior knowledge and acquired new knowledge when arguing about different legal topics. For example, students analyzed the

different texts using their prior knowledge of English during classes and their law backgrounds to understand the information of the cases and the relationship of law here with other countries' laws, it was reflected in the processes of reading because sometimes the students analyzed the text themselves or asked their partner about a legal situation.

Through oral reports, students gained fluency when talking about the different topics of their own fields of study, such as penal justice, steps in investigation, organized crimes, and types of crimes in other countries and in Vietnam. Another student talked in the interview about the improvement of his oral production through reading and speaking practice: "Through reading, I have improved a lot, especially in speaking; we are becoming fluent in the use of English." (Interview, Q 3, Student 11)

Findings in acquisition of specialized vocabulary in this study have showed that students acquired a lot of specific vocabulary and commonly used phrases pertaining to law, which were useful for them in producing oral or written reports. The students applied these techniques (guessing, skimming, scanning, mapping, and outlining) as a way not only to understand the texts but also to acquire a specialized vocabulary that was useful for when it came time to complete written summaries or oral reports. Two of the students explained this in the interview: "Through the vocabulary teacher and the techniques we have learnt (for example, that with a single word we can get the meaning if we do not know another word), we are connecting what we are studying and we are understanding the ideas without using the dictionary. I think that the vocabulary and the topics are very important." (Interview, Q 2, Student 4, 7)

Finally, through this research, students gained an acquisition of knowledge and had the ability to discuss law topics using reading as the main vehicle of this process, which is a practice that contributes to their lives as students and as professionals. Hence, reading legal topics in English increased the students' self-confidence and motivated them to learn information about foreign countries, which will enrich their perspectives about law around the world. Simultaneously, this study has encouraged students to consciously take risks when reading in English in such a way as to acquire enough tools to learn a specialized vocabulary and to gain knowledge that was useful for their lives. They also learned to express their own points of view and prepare for the exigencies of globalization in their fields.

Conclusions

The findings of this research show the effects of students' reading under the implementation of ESP materials through the communicative approach. This research encourages students to investigate information related to their own needs in foreign countries, which is useful for their future lives as professionals. Students of law enforcement must learn specific skills as they develop their careers, such as the ability to

argue, discuss, analyze, or defend their viewpoints based on their own experience or knowledge. Furthermore, this research motivated the students' use of prior knowledge as a relevant source to defend their ideas in front of their peers, who were their close competitors and judges. In addition, this research was a great opportunity for students to become familiar with reading techniques that permitted them access to topics of law written in English; thus, the reading process approach (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading) facilitated the acquisition of a specialized vocabulary, which is a relevant tool for reading, writing, and speaking. At the same time, acquiring a specialized vocabulary made students feel self-confident and motivated not only in their own learning process but also in their use of the English language.

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HOW IS VOCABULARY DISTRIBUTED IN THE NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS OF GRADE 11?

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Abstract

This paper aims to look over the distribution of the vocabulary presented in reading texts and listening transcripts from the new English textbook for high school students of grade 11 in Vietnam. A mini-corpus of all the reading and listening text from the textbook, Google Books, and data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were used for the analysis of the distribution of the most frequent words as well as the collocation of the three most typical content words (have, parents and people) appearing in the textbook. The result shows the same top six function words (the, and, to, of, in, and a) both in reading texts and listening transcripts despite their different ranks in each skill. Have appears mostly in the textbook through three different uses: possession, the necessity of doing something, and an auxiliary verb in the present perfect. In addition, analysis presents that certain adjectives such as young and disabled, and certain prepositions like of and for frequently precede people while in, with, and of are the most frequent ones that follow people. Although parents appears more frequently than young in the textbook, the former is less frequent than the latter in the COCA data with the token of 113,527 and 785,844 respectively. The findings also reveal certain possessive adjectives like my, their, and your that precede parents in most of the cases in the textbook. An analysis of the concordance from the COCA data is carried out to see whether the use of the vocabulary in the new English textbook for 11th grade students is in line with the English used in the United States.

What is the Role of Vocabulary in Language Acquisition?

The fact that vocabulary plays a very important role in the language learning process has been clearly shown by linguists. Vocabulary acquisition has a great effect on the higher-level language process (Adams and Collins, 1977; Chall, 1987). McCarthy and Cart (2013) considered the learning of vocabulary as the heart of language acquisition in terms of the insight input and the “social and linguistic structure of language”. In other words, learners of language have to accomplish basic vocabulary in order to acquire a language (Spada, 2006).

How Important is the Frequency of Vocabulary in Language Learning?

It is clear that vocabulary is essential in language learning, but does a language learner have to acquire every word? The answer lies in the studies which focus on the significance

of word frequency in language acquisition. Nation's (2001) studies suggested that frequent engagement in new words is necessary for learners to acquire a language. Moreover, Spada (2006) believed "[among] the factors that make new vocabulary more easily learnable by second language learners is the frequency with which the word is seen, heard and understood" (p. 98). She reviewed an estimate of around sixteen times and more for learners to acquire a word. Additionally, when discussing the focuses in teaching intensive reading, Nation (2009) gave attention to the role of teaching vocabulary. One of the principles for vocabulary teaching is the priority of highly frequent words (Nation, 2009). Therefore, language learners should draw considerable attention to vocabulary with high frequency (Nation, 2001).

Research Questions

1. How is the vocabulary distributed in the new textbook of English for Vietnamese students of 11th form?
2. What are the most frequent content words and their collocation in the new English textbook for students of grade 11 in Vietnam? Corpora

A corpus is an electronically stored collection of language which occurs naturally in mainly spoken and/or written form (Reppen, 2010). For the analysis of language distribution in the new textbook of English for Vietnamese students in grade 11, three corpora have been employed. The first one is a mini corpus consisting of 2,717 words analyzed by using the software Antconc.3.2.4m (Anthony, 2011) for the vocabulary distribution in the textbook. Second, the Google Books collection is referred to provide a graph of the three most frequently occurring content words. And finally, data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is employed for the comparison of the frequency and collocation of the target words.

What Are the Most Frequent Words and Their Use in the New English Textbook Compared to Their Real Life Usage From the COCA Data?

1. Function Words

The mini corpus shows a distribution of vocabulary in the new textbook in which function words such as *the*, *and*, *to*, *of*, *in*, and *a* are the top six words in the list. While *the*, *and*, *to*, *of*, *a* and *in* are the most frequent in reading texts, those in the listening ones are *and*, *to*, *the*, *of*, *in*, and *a*, despite the differences in the ranking. Meanwhile, the top seven words in the COCA word frequency list (Davies, 2011) include *the*, *be*, *and*, *of*, *a*, *in*, and *to*. Thus, the most frequent function words in the textbook appear in the top seven of the COCA word frequency list. In this regard, the textbook seems to pattern with the American English corpus.

Google Books N-gram Viewer (Figure 1) shows the usage of *the*, *of*, *and*, *to*, *in*, *a* and *be* in academic writing contexts. This frequency of such function words matches the one from the new textbook of English for Vietnamese students in grade 11.

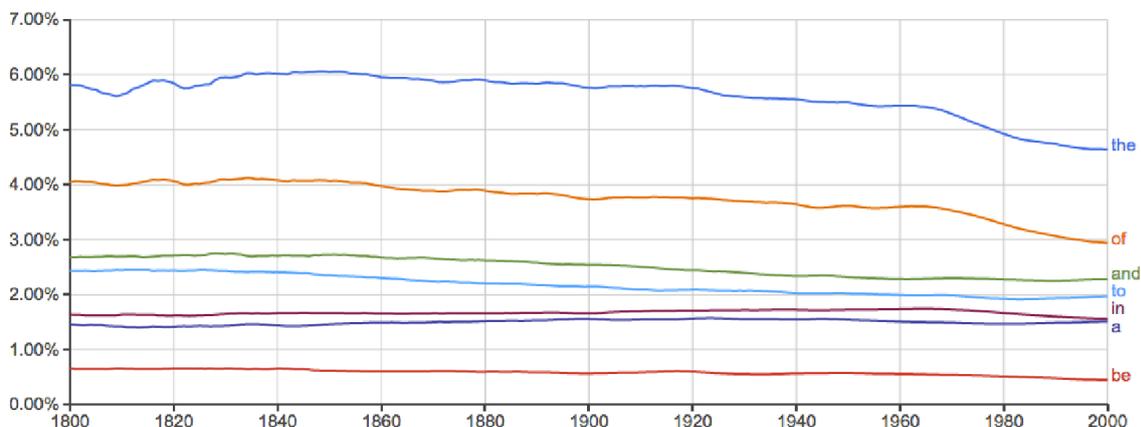


Figure 1. The frequency of the, of, and, to, in, a and be in Google Books (Ngram Viewer, accessed 2015)

2. Content Words

The following graph shows the frequency of *have*, *people*, and *parents* in Google’s book collection. Generally, *have* is used far more than *people* and *parents*, especially in the 1820s. Its frequency dropped dramatically from 1840 to 1980, and has appeared consistently since 1980. Meanwhile *people* and *parents* are regularly used in books despite occurring at a lower frequency than *have*.

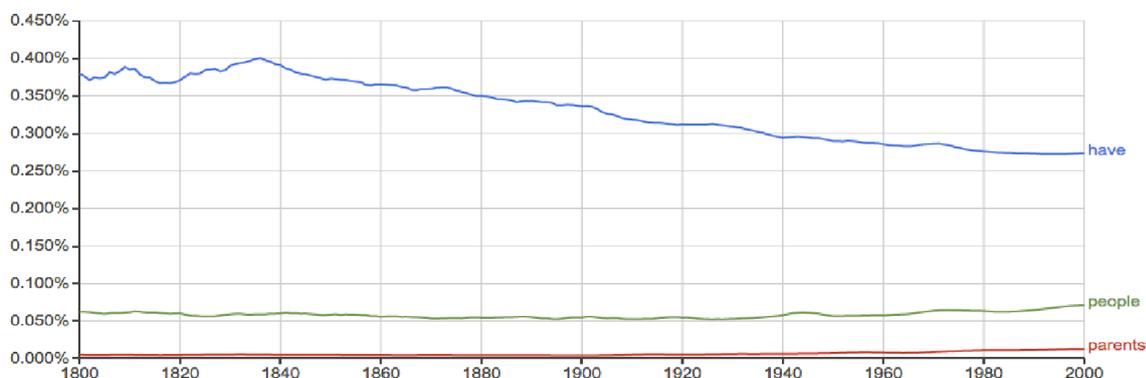


Figure 2. The frequency of have, people, and parents in Google Books (Ngram Viewer, accessed 2015)

Although the ranking varies in listening and reading texts, *have* is the first ranked content word in the textbook (with the frequency of 78 over 11,818). *Have* is also the first content word to appear in the COCA word frequency list and ranked 8th following the top seven frequent function words with the frequency of 4,303,955. According to the analysis of the textbook corpus, *have* is used in three ways in the textbook. First, it is used as a content verb with the meaning of owing something the most frequently (about 43 over 78 tokens).

Second, it is used as an auxiliary verb in the present perfect tense (27 tokens). And finally, *have* refers to the necessity of doing something and followed with a to infinitive. However, data from COCA show a different result. There are 48,945 cases using *have* to mention possession. Then, *have* as an auxiliary verb in the present perfect tense is the most frequently used with the token of 582,559. And finally, *have* is followed with a to infinitive and is repeated 239,877 times.

The next two content words are *parents* and *people*, with the frequency of 64 and 63 (among the 11,811 tokens from the textbook) respectively both in listening and reading texts from the textbook. However, there are considerable differences in the ranking of these two words from COCA. Specifically, *parent* occurs 119,610 times and while *people* is used with 691,468 tokens.

The analysis from the mini corpus shows some interesting collocations of *parents* and *people* used in the textbook.

First of all, there is trend in which some possessives and modal verbs tend to go before and after *parents* frequently. Possessives such as *my* (17 times), *their* (12 times), and *your* (10 times) precede *parents* the most frequently in the textbook. This order remains the same in the COCA list where *my* ranks first with 9,825 tokens, *their* ranks second with 9,309 tokens, and *your* ranks fifth with 3310 tokens after *his* and *her*. In this regard, the textbook language can be said to pattern with general American English. Certain modal verbs such as *should* and *may* are more likely to go after *parents* according to the analysis. There is also the same position in the COCA data in which *should* out-numbers *may* in the token for following *parents*.

Additionally, *people* frequently goes after some adjectives like *young* and *disabled* with frequencies of 10 and 5 respectively in the textbook. According to the data from COCA, however, *young* (ranked the 3rd after *other* and *American*), and *disabled* (ranked 32nd) go before *people*. Moreover, prepositions are also found to follow *people* most of the time. *With*, *in* and *of* are the most frequent ones to go after *people* in the textbook whereas this order changes in COCA data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the corpus analysis shows a general distribution of vocabulary from the new English textbook for students of grade 11 in Vietnam. Function words like *the*, *and*, *to*, *of*, *in*, and *a* are the top six both in the new textbook and in the academic writing contexts from Google Book N-gram, but are in the top seven in the word frequency list from COCA. *Have*, *parents*, and *people* appear as the most frequent content words. The use of these three top content words from the book is likely to reflect the vocabulary use in the world despite some variations in the rankings. Authors and instructors should refer to the vocabulary distribution used both in the textbooks and real life situations for a better quality of curriculum and learning process.

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CRACKING THE SPEAKING SESSION IN THE NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

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Abstract

With the view to boosting the English teaching and learning in Vietnam and bringing it closer to that of regional countries, the New English Textbook has been piloted and used in chosen schools nationwide. While gaining praise on updated interesting content, communicative activities and tasks, the textbook presents some challenges to teachers on how to effectively use it. The teaching of Speaking -"the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13) – has become one of the main concerns of teachers who have got a chance to work with the new textbook. This workshop provides practical instructions and guidance for upper-secondary school teachers of English (hereafter addressed as teachers) to effectively utilize their new English Textbook in teaching Speaking skills to their students within their current teaching contexts as well as students' needs and demands. During the workshop, teacher participants learn to analyze the contents and activities offered in the Speaking sections of the new English Textbook against a set of textbook evaluation checklists. Then, they are instructed to combine this analysis with understandings of their students' characteristics and current teaching context to make grounded decisions on how to organize their teaching lessons and if they need to apply different material adaptation techniques to better support students' learning. What makes the workshop outstanding is the rich level of hands-on experience shared between trainers and the teacher participants. Suggested ideas and designed activities are put under thorough discussion in order to ensure their feasibility. All these products should be made available for immediate application, and additionally can be stored by the participants to serve as a source for their frequent consultation.

Keywords: Speaking, New English Textbook.

The workshop bases itself on some common classroom speaking activities such as:

Controlled Speaking Activities

- 1. Practical situations:** Students can practise requesting and providing information in situations such as asking for directions in a city and ordering meals in a restaurant. For example, after mechanically drilling the question- answer pattern "Where is...? It is...." and prepositions of location, students work in pairs, with one asking for directions to a specific location and the other giving directions according to a map.

- 2. Guessing games:** Students can do guessing activities in pairs or groups. There are many variations. For example, one student chooses a famous person, and the others ask yes-no questions until the identity of the person is determined. Or, one student draws a picture of a fruit or object and turns it over on the desk; the partner guesses what the item is by asking, "Do you have a...?" until the correct answer is found.

Another variation is for the teacher to provide a short, incomplete story plot for students to discuss and guess the way it ends. For example:

A man has been found dead in a phone box. There is blood. We know that he was speaking to someone on the phone just before he died because the receiver is off the hook. How did he die?

The teacher reveals the answer to only one student; the rest of the class must guess the answer by asking that student questions about the plot that can be answered only with *yes*, *no*, or *irrelevant*.

- 3. Information gathering activity** involves conducting surveys, interviews and searches in which students were required to use their language to collect information. Students can practice a set of structures and language repeatedly but in a meaningful way.
- 4. Jigsaw activity** In a jigsaw activity, each partner has one or a few pieces of the "puzzle," and the partners must cooperate to fit all the pieces into a whole picture. The puzzle piece may take one of several forms. It may be one panel from a comic strip or one photo from a set that tells a story. It may be one sentence from a written narrative. It may be a tape recording of a conversation, in which case no two partners hear exactly the same conversation.

Free Speaking Activities

- 5. Role-play** is an activity in which students work in pairs or groups to play the role of different people as indicated in the role cards given by the teacher. For example:

Students role-play the dialogue between a customer and a manager. The customer complains about the quality of the jeans she bought. The manager listens and offers solutions.

A role-play should have:

- + reality of function
- + a simulated environment
- + structure.

- 6. Discussion:** In a discussion, the teacher gives a debatable topic to students. They work in groups to discuss the issue, give their opinions and reasons why they think so. For example:

Work in groups of four. Discuss possible reasons for arguments between parents and teenagers.

There are two typical variations of discussion:

+ a discussion in “buzz groups”

+ a formal debate.

- 7. Presentation (prepared-talk):** Students make a presentation on a topic of their own choice. The talks are not spontaneous conversations; instead, they are more “writing-like”. In the preparation stage, students often work in pairs or groups to brainstorm for ideas and language as well as structure the talk. Then, they rehearse the presentation before sending a representative or the whole group to perform in front of class.

Cracking the Speaking lessons in the New English 10 Textbook

First, participants are introduced to the concept of “scaffolding” (providing temporary support for an inexperienced learner in order to help them to complete a task or acquire a skill, and then gradually withdrawing that support) as a basic know-how.

Ideas for scaffolding in speaking lessons of New English 10 include Pre-teaching vocabulary, Generating ideas and Pre-teaching Speaking frames such as ‘*I learnt that ...*’; ‘*One thing I discovered was ...*’; ‘*I found out that ...*’; ‘*One similarity between _____ and _____ is that ...*’; ‘*A key distinction between _____ and _____ is that ...*’.

Next, participants of the workshop are asked to categorize speaking lessons in the textbook under common types of abovementioned speaking activities. The final answer should look as follows:

○ Interview: Unit 1, 9 → Information gap activity

○ Jig-saw: Unit 7

⇒ Controlled activities

○ Role-play: Unit 3

○ Discussion: Unit 2, 4, 6, 8

○ Presentation: Unit 5, 10

⇒ Free activities

This should be a meaningful lead-in to their group discussion on what and how to scaffold in such activities. Ideas generated and evaluated during the discussion should be taken notes of by participants for later consultation during their own teaching.

Further notices on how to secure the success of each type of speaking activities (in terms of achieving objectives and engaging students) are then open for discussion. For example, in a jigsaw activity, teachers should:

- Divide the parts according to the ability of the students
- Make sure that students with poor study skills do not present an inferior report to the jigsaw group
- Make sure students SPEAK, NOT show their part to their group members.

Meanwhile, in a role-play, scene-setting and clear instructions are vital. As for a discussion, language preparation is important before students start speaking. For a prepared talk, students, similarly, require much support from teachers and peers in terms of ideas, language and confidence building.

The working mode is expected to be interactive and cooperative. Also, the workshop is supposed to be a practical support to teachers who work directly with the new textbook.

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IMPROVING VIETNAMESE EFL LEARNERS' PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH FINAL CONSONANTS: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

How to pronounce English sounds correctly is usually difficult for Vietnamese students in their foreign language acquisition. In verbal communication, students often encounter such problems as pronouncing English words, thus preventing them from delivering oral messages. There have been studies on how students acquire pronunciation in learning English. However, problems with pronouncing English sounds for Vietnamese learners, especially the final sounds, have not yet been analyzed in details. The purpose of this study is to identify students' problems and determine if the problems are involved with mother tongue interference. The contrastive analysis could help Vietnamese students learn English better. The focus of the research was a survey given to students from elementary to intermediate levels at a university in Vietnam. The students were assumed to have certain background knowledge of phonology. The students answered the questions based on the empirical experience of learning English. The data were collected and discussed in a contrastive analysis. Results indicated that the greater percentage of students agreed on the difficulties they encountered in producing English final sounds. The students found it difficult to pronounce single final consonant sounds or clusters of final consonant sounds. Analyzing these problems may provide the basis for better course design as well as teaching methodology.

Keywords: final consonant sounds, mother tongue interference, pronunciation, contrastive analysis

Introduction

For Vietnamese students of English as a foreign language, the oral performance of English is often considered difficult. Being unable to realize the differences between the two languages contributes to the increase of difficulty for non-native speakers. Vietnamese EFL learners often mispronounce the final sounds including single consonants and clusters of consonants, thus making learners' messages misunderstood. The study aims at identifying the problems that the students have, finding out the causes of the problems, categorizing them, making a phonological contrast between L1 and L2, and working out

the solutions to these problems in order to help students improve their pronunciation more effectively.

Literature review

The pronunciation description includes accents, pronunciation in speaking at high and slow speed, pronunciation of words and phrases with the emphasis on clusters of consonant, and pronunciation in conversation focusing on features of fluent speech. Halliday (1980), Martin (1992), and Eggins (1993) indicate that phonology is represented as the realization of the contextual situation and pronunciation plays an important role for the speaker in sending a message to the listener.

It is considered important to acquire pronunciation of sounds since this has an effect on learners' performance of communication (Hinofitis & Baily, 1980, as cited in Le, 2007). Accuracy in pronunciation is evaluated in relation with other language skills (Fraser, 2000, as cited in Le, 2007). Pronouncing English correctly will help students improve both speaking and listening, and ensure that they are easily understood by both non-native and native speakers, thus leading to effective verbal communication.

Cao (2004) brought in numerous pieces of evidence to show that Vietnamese EFL learners did not perceive the sounds as native speakers do. English sounds were pronounced in a linear fashion, which meant that the sounds in a word could be separated. Therefore, Vietnamese consonants, due to the complementary distribution of sounds, were plosive in the initial positions and implosive in final positions. Phan (2004) had the same viewpoint when he pointed out the difference between the English consonant sounds and Vietnamese ones. Duong (2009) attached the common pronunciation mistakes made by Vietnamese students to mother tongue interference, indicating that mispronunciation was often considered less important and even ignored. Nguyen (2007) found out difficulties of Vietnamese speakers in English final consonants such as omitting ending sounds that are perceived as foreign or difficult, reducing final consonants and clusters towards their first language, and adding schwa in final clusters. Such studies by Cao, Phan and Duong have given rise to the fact that the Vietnamese often drop the final sounds when they speak English. Tweed (2012), while assessing the seriousness of mistakes made in contexts, indicated that dropping final consonant sounds makes the sentence hard to understand.

According to Cao (1998), in both English and Vietnamese, there are such phonemes as /b/, /m/, /f/, /v/, /t/, /d/, /n/, /z/, /s/, /l/, /k/, /ŋ/, /h/, etc. Vietnamese has some phonemes that do not exist in English: /p/ (as in *nhanh*, *nhỏ*, *nhung*), /χ/ (as in *không*, *khó*, *kháng*), /c/ (as in *cha*, *cho*, *chỉ*), /w/ (as in *tu*, *bu*, *nhu*). Similarly, English has some phonemes that do not exist in Vietnamese: /θ/ (as in *thing*, *thirsty*, *third*), /ð/ (as in *bathing*, *father*, *mother*), /æ/ (as in *bad*, *hat*, *thank*), /tʃ/ (as in *child*, *church*, *choice*), and /dʒ/ (as in *jack*, *jam*, *job*)

Although much work related to improving students' pronunciation has been done, more studies need to be conducted to give a satisfactory explanation to Vietnamese EFL students' problems in pronunciation as the basis on which the teaching methods are constructed. This study will deal with the problems that students at elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels encounter in their pronunciation of final consonant sounds. In other words, the purpose of the study is to answer the following questions:

1. What are Vietnamese EFL students' problems in producing English consonant sounds at the end of words?
2. What should be done to help Vietnamese EFL students to improve their pronunciation?

These research questions were addressed after an investigation in the context of learning English at a university in Vietnam.

Method

Research design

This study was conducted over a period of one year at a university in Vietnam, where the language of instruction is English. The survey was designed to identify the problems in pronunciation that university students encountered when they learned to pronounce English final sounds correctly. The questionnaire elicited information from the participants' perceived difficulties in speaking English in their learning environment.

Participants

The population in this study consists of 129 university students of the same age learning at different levels: 81 students from elementary classes, 25 from pre-intermediate classes, and 23 from intermediate classes. All the participants are university students who came from many parts in Vietnam. All the participants have the background knowledge of phonology through the lessons provided in English classes. While the study sample cannot be considered representative of all students, the studying conditions at the university ensure the sampling was typical in an accessible context.

Reliability

The author analyzed the participants' responses. Reliability was assessed. The objectivity was ensured since all the participants gave answers to the written questionnaire at different times.

Results

The results are discussed in terms of analyzing the questionnaires on the linguistic characteristics such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation and other factors that affect students' acquisition of English. The first research question concerns the problems Vietnamese students encounter in producing English final sounds or consonant sound clusters at the end of words by the analysis of the questions given to the students at the three levels.

For question 1: "*What is the problem in your presenting speaking tasks*", 68.2% ($N = 88$) of the students at the three levels answered that the problem in their presenting speaking tasks is pronunciation; 19.5 % ($N = 25$) said the problem was related to grammar; and 12.5 % ($N = 16$) said the problem was vocabulary.

For question 2: "*How much difficult do you find it to pronounce final consonant sounds?*", 50.3% ($N = 65$) of the students at the three levels answered that they found it very difficult to pronounce the final consonant sounds. 27.1 % ($N = 35$) said pronouncing final consonant sounds was difficult. 22.4 % ($N = 29$) said pronouncing final consonant sounds was not difficult.

For question 3: "*Which sound clusters do you find most difficult to pronounce?*", 73.6 % ($N=95$) of all the students focused on the consonant clusters at the end of words with 80.2 % ($N=65$) of elementary students, 80 % ($N=20$) of pre-intermediate students and 43.4 % ($N= 10$) of intermediate students.

For question 4: "*What are the reasons for Vietnamese to drop English final sounds in words?*", 12.4% ($N=16$) of all the students at the three levels said that it was unimportant to pronounce the English final sounds correctly. 37.2% ($N=48$) of all the students said that their mistakes were not often corrected. 54.2 % ($N= 70$) of the students said the reason for dropping English final sounds was that it was hard for them to pronounce the last sounds in English words with 5.6 % ($N = 41$) of elementary students, 60 % ($N = 15$) of pre-intermediate students and 61% ($N = 8$) of intermediate students.

For question 5: "*What factor can help you to improve your pronunciation better?*", 65.8 % ($N = 85$) of all students said it was easier for them to have their pronunciation practice guided by teachers. 13.9% ($N = 18$) said they could improve pronunciation with the help of technology. 29.4% ($N = 38$) said that they needed to have lessons provided by teachers in advance.

For question 6: "*What do you think can affect your self-confidence in performing a speaking task?*", 57.4 % ($N = 74$) of all students said having enough pronunciation practice activities could build their self-confidence in performing a speaking task. 13.1% ($N = 17$) considered peer pressure from group work or pair work could affect their self-confidence. 29.5% ($N = 38$) were afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation. Clearly, the results

showed that most students at three levels had the problems in pronunciation which prevented them from speaking English fluently.

Discussion

Through the investigation of 129 students at three levels (elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate), 68% ($N = 88$) of them had difficulty pronouncing sounds as can be shown in question 1. Question 2 shows that although 50.3 % ($N = 65$) of all students found it very difficult to pronounce English final sounds, only 3 intermediate students and 12 pre-intermediate students agreed with this. Similarly, Question 3 shows that only 10 intermediate students have problems with final consonant clusters. Question 4 shows that 54.2 % ($N = 70$) of all students dropping English final sounds was due to the fact that it was hard to pronounce them, but only 8 intermediate students agreed with this. Question 6 shows the increase in the percentage of all students in need of guided pronunciation practice to build self-confidence. This means that the background knowledge of phonology has helped them be aware of the problems that come up and that the results were in accordance with the assumption of the students' background knowledge.

The second research question concerns the solutions to help Vietnamese EFL students to improve pronunciation and communicate successfully in specific contexts. Some linguists also maintain that the common mistakes in pronunciation made by Vietnamese students result from the lack of the knowledge of how the sounds are produced. Other linguists hold the view that mispronunciation is caused by mother tongue interference. However, some Vietnamese sounds based on the international phonetic symbols (Cao, 1998) can be used to teach students how to pronounce difficult English sounds. For example, the English consonant sound /ʃ/ in such words as *wash* or *lash* can be pronounced by people living in northern central Vietnam as in “*sông, suối*”, but Vietnamese does not have /s/ sound at the end of words.

Dropping final sounds is a common mistake made by Vietnamese students when they pronounce English words. They do not release many consonant sounds in the final position in English words. Consequently, when they say words such as *ask*, *sink*, and *white*, the native speakers of English will hear these words pronounced like *as*, *sing*, and *why*.

Vietnamese people do not pronounce the consonant sounds in the final positions since it is quite hard for them to produce such sounds as /ʒ, dʒ, ʃ/ in the ending positions (Ha, 2005). Moreover, what results in this situation may be that little or no attention is paid to correcting pronunciation mistakes when students do not pronounce the final sounds as discovered in the investigation. The mistakes are usually ignored since it is thought that sometimes it is unimportant to correct mistakes that do not intervene the decoding of the message being sent. This problem resulted from the consonant sound pattern differences between Vietnamese and English. While all English consonants sounds can occur at the

beginning of words, in the medial position, or at the end of words, only some consonant sounds can occur in the final position in Vietnamese.

It is also necessary to help Vietnamese students improve their pronunciation of the English final sounds through identifying the similarities and differences between the sounds in English and the counterparts in Vietnamese. One of the distinctive features is that, unlike English, Vietnamese consonants do not include any affricatives (Duong, 2009). Since Vietnamese does not have consonant clusters, English consonant clusters that occur in ending positions are problems for Vietnamese students.

According to Cao (1998: 88), All the final sounds of Vietnamese are not explosive (either soundless or nasal). They include some typical sounds: [-p] as in *ep*, [-t] as in *it*, [-k] as in *ec*, [-m] as in *em*, [-n] as in *in*, [-ŋ^m] as in *ung*. The explosive and the implosive features are due to the complimentary distribution of the consonants. The plosive sounds in English are [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g]; affricates are [tʃ], [dʒ]. The fricatives are [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ], [h].

On producing ending sounds, Vietnamese learners often mistake /s/ for /z/ due to the mother tongue interference. It is in the transference from the first language to the second language that the problem happens (Ha, 2005). Similarly, owing to the lack of aspiration in Vietnamese, many learners pronounce /p/ instead of /k/ in the final position (Thompson, 1987).

Conclusion

The fact that Vietnamese students may not be able to pronounce English final sounds is of great concern for teachers of English. This research, to some extent, will help identify students' problems and determine if they are involved with mother tongue interference, and if, based on the problem analysis, there would be some solutions which teachers and students could benefit. The findings based on the analysis of data collected from the survey of students involved in the research showed that the greater percentage of students failed to perform speaking skills due to the mispronunciation of final sounds, thus preventing them from successful communication. The problems of students' pronunciation are due to the fact that Vietnamese has neither sounds equivalent to English nor sounds pronounced in final positions. Once perceiving how the final sounds are made, students can pronounce the sounds correctly. The study was conducted with university students. However, it could pave the way for the proper collection and the choice of English language teaching resources for Vietnamese and foreign teachers to decide in order to meet the objective of the course after their students' problems were identified. The study may work as the basis for further solutions to these problems and suggests that the pronunciation of ending consonants should be emphasized in teaching English pronunciation.

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BOOKWORM PROJECT: AN INTEGRATED TEACHING MODEL TO DEVELOP ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AMONG EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

Integrated learning has now become a popular trend in modern language learning and teaching approaches. This has also been explored at the University of Languages and International Studies as a way to meet the demand of the 21st curriculum. Bookworm projects have been built on this foundation, identifying the opportunities to link different language skills within a single project. It was applied to teach Social English to freshmen two years ago and has continued to evolve. This project requires students to read different graded stories, novels, and literary works which are appropriate to students' language proficiency, discuss the assigned works in class, and then present and reflect on different aspects of the works in both oral and written form. Students are, therefore, able to improve and be assessed in three categories, namely reading, writing, and speaking skills. Improvement is not only evident in students' learning but also in their attitudes towards reading. This presentation provides a clear overview of the Bookworm project and suggests its value in supporting students' integrated learning procedure.

Keywords: integrated learning, project, language skills, literary works.

Introduction

The literature on ESL/EFL language skill development has long advocated the integrated approach to the study of language. There are basically two types of integration, which are intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary. The former one, which is also the definition applied in this study, refers to a skill-based approach to teach language skills all in one. The later refers to an approach in which content and language integrated learning combines language teaching and the teaching of other subjects. The integrated language skills approach is considered to be an effective approach for promoting language learning in real life contexts for communicative purposes (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). The segregation of skills is not consistent with the nature of language and language learning as in the first language learning context, all skills are interrelated in a way that one skill usually carries over to another skill (Strang, 1972). Recent empirical research also confirmed the significant role of language skill integration in improving language learning outcomes (Al-Ghamari, 2004; Bose, 2003; Faydi, 2003; Hefferman, 2006). However, in Vietnam, most of the curricula witness the segregation of language skills and there has been little concern for integrated

language skills approach. In creating this model, much focus is given to make integration of language skills beneficial to improve students' language proficiency.

In addition, novels and stories have been exploited in language teaching and learning for a range of benefits they offer. Lazar (1990) emphasized some prominent advantages. First, it is undeniable that they provide "a more involving source for pedagogical activities than some of the pseudo-narratives" in course books. Novels and stories engage students intellectually, emotionally, and linguistically, so they allow for a variety of motivating classroom activities, from extensive reading tasks to close textual analysis. Another enormous benefit is that novels and stories can engage students in a process of detecting meaning, forming hypotheses and drawing inferences, from which their language awareness and language capacity are greatly increased. According to Collie and Slater (1990), there are four main reasons leading to the exploitation of literature in the classroom: valuable authentic materials, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement.

Therefore, with an aim to create a model which can make use of literature and integrate different language skills to best improve students' language proficiency, Bookworm project has been a part of the curriculum for teaching English to freshmen at the University of Languages and International Studies.

Methodology

Background

The present study aims at investigating learners' reflections on the Bookworm project applied through the two semesters as a component of the subject called Social English.

Bookworm project is the name of a teaching and learning, as well as assessment tool which involves the exploitation of different novels and stories into the syllabus. The first semester was divided into three blocks of five weeks each. Each block dealt with one graded novel or one set of short stories taken from Oxford Bookworms Library (Oxford University Press). The novels and stories, which were the Phantom of Opera, Cries from the Heart: Stories from Around the World, and Playing with Fire: Stories from the Pacific Rim, were chosen basing on students' interests and levels of English proficiency. The procedure for each block was as follows.

Step 1: Before reading activities: in class, teachers carried out some activities such as discussion, picture matching, prediction, etc.

Step 2: While reading: At home, students worked individually to read the assigned literary works and do comprehension questions in three weeks.

Step 3: After reading - Conference week: in class, the week after home reading, teachers checked student's comprehension and reflections of the literary works. Various activities

were employed, namely discussion, debate, creating new ending, role-playing, and a comprehension quiz.

Step 4: After reading – Presentation week: Students worked in small groups to make an oral presentation of the literary work. Its content should cover the main points and their own reflections of the literary work. Students were free to choose the format of the presentation which could be a talk show, a discussion, a presentation, or a role-play.

For the second semester, four novels and a set of stories at intermediate levels were selected. They were the Secret Garden, When Summer Comes, Ghost Stories, Cold Comfort Farm, and the Perks of Being a Wallflower. The second semester were also divided into three blocks like the first one, but with a difference of containing two literary works per block in the first two blocks and one novel in the final one. The procedure was just the same as the four-step one in the first semester, but with an addition of one more step.

Step 5: After reading - Writing week: students work in small groups to write and submit their written reflections in the following week after the oral presentation.

Participants

Participants were 26 freshmen whose English proficiency was pre-intermediate in the first semester and intermediate in the second one.

Research questions

The study was carried to answer the following research questions.

1. To what extent do the students think Bookworm project aided them in improving cultural awareness, language skills, and language competence?
2. What are the students' suggestions for better application of Bookworm project?

Instrument

In this study, a two-section questionnaire was used to collect data. The first section, in which respondents are requested to choose a number from 1 to 5 using the criteria, based on Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree), is for students to reflect on Bookworm Project. The second part contains students' comments on how to apply this project more effectively.

Results and analysis

The results are presented to answer the two aforementioned research questions. First, findings about different aspects of students' language and language learning are presented in a table, and then based on the responses to the open-ended question, students' comments towards the application of Bookworm Project will be discussed.

In table 1, the descriptive statistics displays percentages with regard to the extent to which students agree or disagree that Bookworm project helps them improve their cultural awareness, language skills, and language competence.

Table 1: Survey of the application of Bookworm project in EFL teaching

Doing Bookworm Project helps me to improve my:	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1. Understanding of the authentic language used in literature.	0	12%	12%	35%	42%
2. Critical thinking about the target language culture.	7%	15%	31%	23%	15%
3. Reading habits	0	0	15%	38%	46%
4. Reading speed	8%	8%	15%	46%	23%
5. Vocabulary and expressions	0	15%	8%	31%	46%
6. Grammar and structures	12%	15%	38%	19%	15%
7. Interaction with peers in class.	0	7%	12%	15%	65%
8. Speaking skills	0	4%	12%	31%	54%
9. Presentation skills	15%	12%	19%	23%	31%
10. Listening skills	38%	23%	19%	15%	4%
11. Translation skills from target language into mother tongue.	35%	31%	15%	12%	7%
12. Writing skills	12%	15%	38%	12%	23%
13. Confidence in using the target language in general.	0	0	31%	35%	35%
<i>Note: SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly agree.</i>					

As for the statistical distribution of answers shown in table 1, the majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that Bookworm Project helped them improve: understanding of the authentic language used in literature, critical thinking about the target language culture, reading habits, reading skills, vocabulary and expressions, interaction with peers, speaking skills, and confidence in using the target language in general. This is due to the fact that students were exposed to different literary works, motivated to read at home a lot in the assigned weeks, encouraged to think about what they had read, and then go in-depth into the novels or stories to have some reflections. Moreover, thanks to the conference and presentation weeks, students were given chances to discuss and speak a lot, from which their speaking and communications skills were improved.

Nonetheless, it seems that for two aspects, many students were undecided about the role of Bookworm Project, namely grammar and structures, and writing skills surprisingly. It is assumed that students may have felt confused about the role of reading literary works in improving their grammar and structures as this was extensive reading, and students may

have only paid attention to content instead of language use. Regarding writing skills, it is probable that student might have felt the amount of writing was not enough for them to improve this skill as they only wrote in groups three times throughout the whole academic year.

In addition, it is noticeable that the majority of students denied the role of Bookworm project in improving their listening skills and translation skills. This may be because there was no time at all to allocate for the students to listen to the audio file of the literary works and translation was not a featured activity in this project.

Discussion of students’ responses to the open-ended question

In this part, students’ views on how to better implement Bookworm project as an appropriate segment of the syllabus are analyzed. It is a pity that only some of the students yielded some comments to answer this question. However, they are of primary importance for the process of revising the application of Bookworm project in the future.

Table 2: Students’ comments on how to better implement Bookworm project.

Problems	Some suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection of literary works - Literary works relevant to students’ general interests; boring set of stories: Playing with Fire: Stories from the Pacific Rim; ghost stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More stories about romance - More short pieces of free writing about the literary works.

As can be seen from the problems, students were concerned with the choice of the literary works most. According to Collie and Slater (1990, p.6-7), a number of aspects should be taken into account. Among them, its interest, appeal, and relevance to students’ background knowledge and students’ language ability are the most prominent. In this project, literary texts were chosen carefully under those criteria, so most of the readings were appealing to students, except for two sets of short stories, namely Playing with Fire: Stories from the Pacific Rim and a set of ghost stories. The previous was said to be boring as they were not closely related to students’ background knowledge. The later was considered to be not scary enough for students.

As suggested, students would like to have more literary texts about romance. It is understandable as students are almost 18 or 19 years old, and love and romance seem to be their popular concern. Moreover, students would like to write more pieces of short writing reflecting their own thoughts and feelings after each reading. It is assumed that by this way their writing could be improved and the ideas and language learnt in each literary text could be better exploited.

Conclusion

The implementation of Bookworm project in the syllabus is proved to be undeniably beneficial as it can improve students' different aspects of language proficiency and provide their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to practice English in various contexts. For the implementation of Bookworm project into the curriculum, some important things should be considered:

1. Careful selection of literary texts to meet students' needs, motivation, interests, background knowledge, and language level.
2. Tailored-made activities and integrated tasks to be exploited before, during, and after reading sessions.
3. Students' home reading assignment must be closely monitored to ensure that students read, comprehend somewhat about the readings, and have some personal reflections.
4. Students' group work should be supervised to ensure that every student in one group performs an equal role, not letting any individual dominate and take over others' responsibilities.
5. Teacher's roles are not limited to assigning reading texts and carrying out tasks, but are to be more motivating and making the most of learning opportunities of using literature.

The research confirmed that integrated language skills approach, together with the exploitation of literature, was not only valuable in improving students' language ability but it also created an enjoyable educational experience for students and teachers alike.

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ETHICS IN LANGUAGE TESTING – INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR VIETNAM

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Abstract

Recent time has witnessed a growing interest in the role of ethics in language testing with two special issues of Language Testing in 1997, Language Assessment Quarterly in 2004, the publication of ILTA Code of Ethics (2000) and two book-length treatments by Shohamy (2001) and McNamara and Roever (2006). However, this issue is still relatively underexplored in Vietnam despite the boom of the ELT industry and the frequent use of language tests in the country. To bridge this critical gap, the presentation will first introduce a working definition of ethics in language testing and then argue why this issue should be regarded as a major item on every language testing agenda. This will be followed by a critical review of practical approaches to ensuring ethical language testing as adopted by prestigious examination boards. Finally, the presentation will examine how such international practices fit in the Vietnamese context, and provide some implications for various stakeholders including but not limited to classroom teachers, teacher trainers, and policy makers.

Keywords: Ethics, language testing, Vietnam, high-stakes testing

What is ethics in language testing?

Alderson, Clapham and Wall (1995) assert that ethics in language testing is merely an extended validity comprised of validity and washback, a viewpoint that can be traced back to Messick's (1989) consequential validity or the social consequences of test use. Nevertheless, Davies (2008) cautions that this view of ethics may entail more social consequences than what language testers can account for. Hence, he suggests setting the reasonable limits for ethics in language testing.

Lynch (1997) proposes a more elaborate view of ethics as involving consent, deception, confidentiality and fairness. In other words, the extent of ethicality is determined via the examination of aspects such as whether test takers are clearly advised of test content, objectives, results and uses and whether face validity, concern for public humiliation, bias in test content, and consequences of language testing decisions are taken into consideration.

To sum up, despite considerable differences in the view of ethics, there is general consensus that ethics in language testing is a set of agreed rules (Davies et al, 1999) that

govern the conduct of professional language testers, guiding them to make the decisions that both are right in and of themselves and lead to the best possible results at every stage of the testing procedure.

Why should ethics receive priority consideration?

The matter of ethics in testing was first raised at the AILA congress in 1996 (Davies, 1997b) amid the professionalising and commercialization of the field due to governments' increased use of language test results for high-stakes decisions such as education, employment and immigration.

Meanwhile, public perceptions of test accountability are frequently negative as revealed in Lynch's investigation (1997) into a standardised exam in Victoria, Australia. Norton's survey (1998) uncovers similar findings about lack of accountability in language testing practices in both developing and developed countries and suggests the need for a discussion of language testing ethics.

Thrasher (2004) reaffirms the need to address ethics owing to the unfair treatment against test-takers, and envisions the resultant betterment of testing services. Two other reasons cited by Davies (2004) include the remarkable impact of tests on people's lives, and the vulnerability of language tests to ethical issues due to the dual nature of language as both knowledge and skill.

All the aforementioned sources assert that ethics deserves a core position in all language testing contexts besides psychometric and linguistic factors. The next part will further elaborate on how this can be translated into practice according to the relevant literature.

How can ethics be implemented in language testing?

Regarding the practice of ethics in language testing, McNamara and Roever (2006) mentions three traditional methods, namely the psychometric techniques to detect biases, the systematic inspection of suitability of test content via a process called fairness review, and the prescription of appropriate behaviour via codes of ethics. Besides these, a more recent approach named critical language testing by Shohamy (2001) will also be reviewed.

Psychometric detection of bias

Test bias occurs when test items work differentially for particular sub-groups of test takers, and it is a frequent concern in testing (McNamara, 1998). Various sophisticated psychometric techniques have been developed to identify and lessen the effect of this confound on test scores. These are divided into four groups in McNamara and Roever (2006), including analyses based on item difficulty, nonparametric approaches, item response theory based approaches, and others such as logistic regression and multifaceted measurement.

However, Elder (1997) has pointed out that bias detection via psychometric techniques is not ethically neutral as claimed because it ultimately relies on human decisions about test construct and inferences. This problem was documented in the same paper on LOTE (Languages Other Than English) school examinations, which also revealed that adjustments made on the bias analyses might even generate further unfairness. In other words, it can be said that though psychometric approach still plays a pivotal role in ethical language testing, it alone is far from sufficient and other solutions must be sought to complement it.

Fairness review

Besides the psychometric approach, major language testing organisations also adopt the fairness review as part of their commitment to fair testing (McNamara and Roever, 2006). At the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations, the test writing guidelines prescribe the avoidance of potentially offensive, too specialised or technical items. Once written, the items are examined for appropriateness of content and other problems during the pre-editing stage.

A similar and even stricter process is in place at the Educational Testing Service (ETS), which publishes its own Fairness Review Guidelines. Under this framework, all testing staff is required to undergo fairness review training, and all test items are screened by well-trained ethics experts whose job is to remove those involving age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

However, there are two major problems with such fairness review (McNamara & Roever, 2006). First, there are remarkable differences among cultures regarding the potential offensiveness of each topic or item, resulting in the need for complicated country-specific fairness guidelines in the case of international tests like IELTS and TOEFL. Second, some explicitly avoided materials may actually be construct-relevant, so their omission may lead to an underrepresentation of test constructs.

Overall, the practice of fairness review is highly laudable in spite of these problems as it represents the serious consideration of international test developers for ethical testing. Besides, it may act as the model for fairness review of national language tests where there are still disadvantaged groups of candidates, yet the cultural homogeneity may ease the identification of offensive topics and items.

Code of ethics

According to Davies (2008), to compensate for the lack of sanctions against members for unethical conduct as often seen in strong professions like law and medicine, language testing associations can offer an 'ethical milieu' in form of codes of ethics and/ or practice.

Such professional codes have recently been developed by major language testing associations such as the International Language Testing Association (ILTA), the

Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), and the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (ELTA). Due to the scope of this essay, only the Code of Ethics of ILTA, the global forum for language testers, will be discussed.

The ILTA Code of Ethics consists of 9 principles further specified by annotations, stipulating the appropriate conduct of ILTA members as well as the potential challenges and limitations in implementation of the principles. McNamara & Roever (2006) highlights the role of this code as a moral framework for testers' work, yet critiques its vagueness and paucity of mechanisms against violations. Davies (2011), as the leading author of the code, is well aware of this problem and concedes that a code has no legal bearing, hence cannot protect a profession from misuse.

All in all, as a single approach, the adoption of codes of ethics may be unavoidably partial (Elder, 1997). However, as it makes explicit the rules of conduct approved by the professional community, the code provides the legitimacy for testers to withdraw from unethical testing projects and for other stakeholders especially test-takers to question dubious assessment practices.

Critical language testing

Concerns about the enormous power of tests and the unethical language testing practice has led Shohamy (2001) to coin the term *critical language testing* in which tests are embedded in social and political contexts, placing the field within the domain of critical pedagogy. Its foremost aim is to “minimize, limit, control the powerful uses of tests” (Shohamy, 2001, p.131), encouraging stakeholders to question test uses, test materials as well as values and beliefs represented by tests.

Critical testing can be regarded as an innovative development of language testing in recent time as it engages the wider sphere of social and political dialogue, adding the social dimension to the traditional bases of psychometrics and linguistics. It should be noted that the critical language testing movement is not aimed at the abolishment of tests, but the democratisation of the testing procedure by involving all stakeholders (especially test takers) and using multiple assessment methods.

Nonetheless, few studies in language testing have adopted this critical approach probably because it delegates tremendous responsibility to the practitioners (Karami, 2013). Shohamy (2007) urges stakeholders especially teachers to critique the uses and consequences of tests in order to alleviate their enormous and harmful influence, yet its feasibility depends to a large extent on the power granted to them. Unfortunately, it is in the countries where teachers are the most powerless that language tests are most often misused, so a critical stance is highly needed but rarely taken (Fulcher, 2009).

Overall, the foremost contribution of the critical language testing approach is to shed light on the potentially catastrophic consequences of test uses and heightens the need to adopt a

variety of approaches to mitigate those. It remains to be seen if this approach will ever gain the prominence like its traditional counterpart of psychometrics.

Implications for Vietnam

The infancy of language testing in Vietnam signifies that it will take a remarkable amount of time and effort to raise the ethical standard of the field. The literature suggests that the resources towards this aim should be channeled in two directions.

First and foremost, language testing should be professionalised following the suggestions of Davies (1997a). The demand for professionalisation is urgent considering the fact that most language testers are full-time teachers who produce tests casually on request without any professional code to guide their conduct. The most effective professionalising scheme is arguably substantial training especially in quantitative techniques, second language acquisition, and social aspects of language testing (McNamara & Roever, 2006). Besides, Vietnamese language testers should be funded to participate in international testing organisations like the ILTA. Via quality discussion and debate, they are more likely to emulate ethical practices of international colleagues in their own contexts and eventually formulate their own local community of practice.

Another approach is to democratize the testing practice as informed by Shohamy (1997). In other words, all stakeholders including but not limited to test takers, test developers, classroom teachers should be involved in the process. In this model, the test taker ability is measured by an array of methods such as self-assessment, teacher observation, portfolios, and centrally administered tests. The assessment information is then interpreted formatively in a multi-party conference to advise the test taker of strategies for improvement. To fit in with the norm-referenced test-based assessment culture of Vietnam, this model may have to be simplified, and training must be provided to enhance the assessment literacy of teachers, students and parents. Hopefully, the recent adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) will contribute to this democratization process as the CEFR supplies a coherent and transparent framework for teaching, learning and assessing.

Conclusion

Ample evidence from the literature on the life-changing impact of language tests and frequent malpractices in the field indicates that its ethical standard must be improved with the collaborative effort of all stakeholders. As stated in the study, language testers should abide by their professional codes and utilise a variety of psychometric tools, testing organisations should conduct fairness review while language teachers and students should critically probe all aspects of tests including their uses and consequences.

For Vietnam where tests are poorly written but extensively used, the issue of ethics proves even more pressing. Two of the most viable solutions are possibly to professionalise the language testing field via tester training and international interaction, and to democratize the assessment culture.

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USING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN PRONUNCIATION TRAINING FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research is to improve students' pronunciation performance, especially English vowel sounds, through a pronunciation training program. There were 20 non-English majored students from Hanoi University of Science, Vietnam National University, Hanoi participating in this program. During 10 weeks, students were provided with explanation on English vowel production as well as the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese vowel systems before practicing these sounds using Dickerson's Covert Rehearsal Model. The data were collected from three questionnaires and two tests - the pre-test and post-test. The analysis of collected data proved that after the training program, students gained certain improvement in their pronunciation performance. The number of errors in pronouncing vowels decreased; nevertheless, some sounds remained problematic with learners. By studying the mistakes, the researcher could find more proof of the relationship between L1 and L2 and the negative influence of L1 on L2 acquisition.

Keywords: Dickerson Covert Rehearsal Model, L1, L2, language learning strategies, pronunciation, sounds

Introduction

Problem statement and rationale for the study

Whether English is learnt as a second language or a foreign language, pronunciation should be paid adequate attention by both teachers and learners as an English learner with a limited pronunciation performance may lose his self-confidence in social interactions, which "negatively affects estimations of a speaker's credibility and abilities" (Gilakjani, 2012, p. 119). On the other hand, learners with good English pronunciation tend to be understood despite their frequent grammatical mistakes in speech because good knowledge of English grammar is not an insurance of intelligibility (Munro, 2011).

Even though pronunciation is said to be able to be acquired naturally (Krashen, 1985), pronunciation instruction is proven to bring students chances to enhance their intelligibility and comprehensibility, which are influential factors of their communicative competence (Prator, 1971, Morley, 1991 as cited in Darcy, Ewert, & Lidster, 2012). According to Harmer (2007), students can overcome difficult sounds by understanding how they are

produced while teachers may support their learning of pronunciation by making them aware of their mispronunciation (Kenworthy, 1987).

With profound influence of the development of English as an international language, Vietnamese schools are providing students with English as one of the core subjects at school. In big cities, children can even learn English before they start their primary school (Ha, 2005). However, it is problematic that “many Vietnamese speakers can speak English, but only a few have intelligible English pronunciation” (Ha, 2005, p.1). As observed, students in Hanoi University of Science (HUS) share the same problem. They long to speak English accurately and fluently but for some reasons, English becomes too challenging for them and they are too shy to speak English. With the desire to help my students first improve their pronunciation skills and then strengthen their self-confidence in using English, I decided to conduct an action research in which my HUS students were provided with *frequent pronunciation training combined with pronunciation learning strategies*.

Research questions

The study is expected to find answers for the following research questions:

1. Are there any problems of learners when producing English vowel sounds? If yes, what are they?
2. To what extent does pronunciation training enhance students’ pronunciation performance?

Methodology

This study, with the action research method, was conducted in a class with 20 students. In terms of **knowledge about the English vowel system**, through the questionnaire, fifteen out of twenty students admitted that they could not remember all sounds and their symbols. In terms of **problems in learning and practicing English pronunciation**, the vast majority of participants stated that they could not identify their pronunciation mistakes while speaking. In addition, more than half of the students (13 out of 20) were pessimistic about their pronunciation when emphasizing that they found it impossible to pronounce sounds correctly.

Results

Research question 1: Are there any problems of learners when producing English vowel sounds? If yes, what are they?

Group 1: Incorrect pronunciation of sounds resulting from replacing an English vowel with another in Vietnamese

As a matter of fact, the vowel / æ / does not exist in Vietnamese, so students who could not pronounce the sound correctly tended to replace it with the sound /e/, which is a common vowel of Vietnamese and English languages. A very common problem that has appeared in recorded speech by most of the students in this study is the mispronunciation of the sounds /əʊ/ and (?). Despite the fact that the sound /əʊ/ does exist in the Vietnamese vowel system, almost all students participating in this research pronounced the letter “o” in “home” or “most” as /o/ (represented by the letter “ô” in Vietnamese).

Group 2: Mispronounced letters caused by using the wrong sound for its representing letter in English

Problems with letter “a”.

When pronouncing the word “Pacific” in the text of the two tests, students could not decide which was the correct way to pronounce it and many incorrect ways of pronouncing this letter were observed. The exact sound for the letter “a” in this case is /ə/ as the stress falls on the second syllable. However, this letter was mispronounced as /a/ (represented by letter “a” in Vietnamese), /eɪ/ which is one of the sounds represented by “a” in English like in “make” or “cake” or /e/.

Problems with letter “i”.

In English, “i” can represent a variety of sounds such as /ɪ/ in “fish”, “film”, or “him”; /i:/ in “police”; or /aɪ/ in “find”, “bike”, or “wide”. Therefore, it was easy to understand why the students in this study were confused when deciding whether to choose /ɪ/ or /aɪ/ to pronounce the letter in the tests. After all, they put /ɪ/ for “i” instead of /aɪ/ or vice versa.

Problems with letter “e”.

With this letter, the most frequently-mispronounced words are “incredible” /ɪn'kredəbl/ and “valley” /'væli/. Regarding the pronunciation of “incredible”, the first letter “e” was pronounced as /ɪ/ instead of /e/ by one-third of the students in the pre-test. This number reduced to three students in the post-test. Letter “e” in “valley” was mispronounced as /eɪ/ by 70% of the students (equal to 14 students) in the pre-test and 8 students in the post-test.

Research question 2: To what extent does pronunciation training enhance students' pronunciation performance?

The answer to this question is based on the comparison of the scores of the pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was taken by students before the training course while the post-test was completed after the course had finished. The two tests were used to discover the effectiveness of two main measurements of the course, the explicit instruction of English vowel sounds and the practice at home following the DCRM. However, it is impossible to evaluate the level of effectiveness of each measurement through the two tests, so any effect found from the comparison of the two test scores is considered to be the result of those

solutions in combination. It is important to notice that the marking of the tests was based on the number of mistakes made by students. Therefore, the higher the mark they got, the more mistakes they had. The tables below summarize the descriptive statistics of these two tests.

Table 1: Comparison of the means and standard deviation between pre-test and post-test

PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS			
	Mean	N	S.D
Pre-test	15.85	20	4.295346
Post-test	10.80	20	2.706717

Table 2: The results of paired samples t-test of pre-test and post-test

PAIRED SAMPLES TEST							
	Paired Differences				T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
Pair: Pre-test Post-test	5.05	1.157	2.63	7.47	4.3636	19	0.0003

From the first table, it can be seen that the mean of the pre-test was 15.85 (S.D = 4.29) in comparison with 10.8 (S.D = 2.7) of the post-test. As noticed above, the students with better pronunciation of vowels would get lower marks because they made fewer mistakes. Therefore, when the score of the pre-test was higher than in the post-test, it means that the number of mistakes was reduced in the post-test. Moreover, the Standard Deviation figures show that there were bigger differences in learners' pronunciation performance in the pre-test while in the post-test this gap was reduced. In the paired sample T-test, the p value is $0.0003 < 0.05$. This suggests that after the training course, students gained a significant improvement in their vowel sound production.

Discussion

The analysis of students' problematic sounds in the pre-test and post-test has once again proved the relationship between L1 and L2. According to Odlin (1989, as cited in Ly, 2007) and Celce-Murcia, et al. (1996), the influence of L1 on L2 can be reflected in the phenomenon that L2 learners tend to replace an L2 sound that does not exist in their L1

with an L1 similar sound. In this study, the tendency to replace an English vowel with another Vietnamese sound was one of the causes for students' mispronunciation. Therefore, when teaching English pronunciation, the teacher should notify students about the possible influence of their native language on the pronunciation of English sounds. Moreover, the teacher can study more thoroughly the problems which are caused by the negative transfer of L1 to L2.

Each language has its own features, and so does English. However, some of its features can actually cause difficulties for learners (Kelly, 2001). In this study, the trouble arose from the mismatch between English spelling and sounds. Therefore, there might be confusion for students when selecting the correct pronunciation for a letter. Some special features of the English spelling and sound systems should be informed to students so that they will not be surprised when observing a rule that is different from their native language.

Conclusion and suggestions

Studies on the use of learning strategies in pronunciation still remain very few. More attention to this field should be encouraged as teaching and learning pronunciation are of great importance in supporting other practical skills in English. Further research can be done with the same framework of the pronunciation training program in this study to re-examine the actual benefit of formal instruction of English sounds and the Covert Rehearsal Model. Those studies can continue working with consonants or other elements of English suprasegmentals.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS: REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

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Abstract

This paper reports reflections from young learner classroom teachers in Dong Thap province. Reflections were from teaching young learners, aiming to look for teaching techniques which brought effectiveness in productive language among young learners. Teachers used three very important sources—pictures, stories, and games—to engage young learners in classrooms. Evidence from the observations showed that routine reflections gave teachers opportunities to evaluate teaching for the betterment. For example, when introducing a new word, teachers used PowerPoint to show pictures and used some games to check young learners' understanding; however, teachers needed to review their understanding and use words regularly. Teachers also needed to create an English environment for learners to remember words and utter them accurately. Young learners should have opportunities to review old words; then, learn new words, and build their vocabulary. Specifically, together with stories from picture books with characters, stories from new vocabulary helped learners to remember words and learn culture. For instance, 'school bus' was a new term for young learners in Cao Lanh city; but it was very popular in most states in the United States. Once the teacher told young learners in friendly ways about taking a 'school bus', learners were able to know vocabulary and learn the culture of 'school bus'. In addition, games were mandatory to relate words to real life with learners' interest, such as real objects and songs. In brief, reflections brought benefits to teacher effectiveness.

Keywords: Young learners, reflective practices

Introduction

Motivating children in learning English is one of difficulties in teaching children. Teachers have faced holding children's interest while running young learners' classrooms of English language. The instructors in this study found that how children learned and used English was very different. When discussing differences between children and adults in language learning, Ur (2006) indicated, "you can raise children's motivation and enthusiasm (by selecting interesting activities, for example) more easily than that of older, more self-reliant and some cynical learners" (p. 288). Teachers witnessed children sometimes very excited to learn; other times they were so weary to learn. It was so challenging to engage

children in classroom activities and they could not remember words they had learned. The situation raised the questions “how are young learners engaged in classrooms?”

Recent studies indicated techniques for teachers to teach children. Particularly, pictures, stories, and games were three very popular sources for motivate children in learning the English language. For example, teachers can use pictures to attract children’s attention. “The most obvious type of visual material for children is the picture: and the more clearly visible, striking and colourful the better” (Ur, 2006, p. 289). Stories were considered as one of effective ways for children to practice their English. “Young children love having stories told to them (even adults continue to enjoy it!); and older ones begin to read for themselves” (Ur, 2006, p. 289). Particularly, children love books with colours. “Younger children love books with bright colours and attractive illustrations” (Blackmore, 2015). In addition, games or game-like—language-learning activities provided tremendous ways to increase children’s motivation once teachers knew how to enhance it effectively. “If we design our games in such a way that they are productive of language learning they become an excellent, even essential, part of a programme of children’s learning activities” (Ur, 2006, p. 290).

There were also other sources which need discussing. When talking about teaching children English at home, Blackmore (2015) introduced using flashcards for vocabulary and songs for new words and pronunciation. “Children learn naturally when they are having fun. Flashcards are a great way to teach and revise vocabulary and there are many different games which you can play with flashcards, such as Memory, Kim’s game, Snap or Happy Families Songs are a really effective way to learn new words and improve pronunciation” (Blackmore, 2015). Importantly, children were able to do reflections, when writing about enhancing children’s learning and thinking, Epstein (2003) indicated, “Young children ages three to six are capable of making thoughtful decisions about their behavior and keen observation about their environment”.

Methods and Procedures

This action research project was conducted in young learners’ classrooms which included children at the ages of 7 or 8. Action research was defined as “a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the “actor” in improving and/or refining his or her actions” (Sagor, 2000). Instructors wanted to know how teaching techniques brought effectiveness in productive language among young learners. “Perhaps even more important is the fact that action research helps educators be more effective at what they care most about—their teaching and the development of their students“ (Sagor, 2000). The two instructors involved in the study had anxiety about how effective three very popular sources—pictures, stories, and games— were in engaging young learners in classrooms. “Action research is

conducted by one or more individuals or groups for the purpose of solving a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Data Collection

Observation notes

During the class meetings, instructors looked at how children performed in the classrooms. A tally sheet was designed to collect data on the number of times the students used language and times they used language correctly. Observation notes were very important for evaluating children’s oral skills because the teachers did not record children’s utterance. Particularly, children’s attitudes and learning skills were also noted. The purpose was to see how confident they were in each meeting and how they worked with their friends.

Portfolios

Each student had his or her folder as their records. Their work sheets were kept for evaluation and reports to their parents. Because of time consumption, instructors did not record all children’s oral work.

Keeping journals

Reflections were written on what had been done to improve children’s ability in learning English. The notes were to answer the question “how are young learners engaged in English classrooms?”. The instructors involved looked at trends of children’s progress and notes for themselves in teaching in using three very popular sources—pictures, stories, and games—to engage young learners in classrooms.

Analysis of Data and Findings

An English language environment

Evidence from the observations showed that an English language environment gave children opportunities to use language better. In fact, classes were done using visual aids to teach. For example, when introducing a new word, lessons were conducted by using PowerPoint to show pictures and used some games to check young learners’ understanding. Instructors found that they needed to review learners’ understanding and ensure that they were using words regularly. They needed to create an English environment for learners to remember words and utter them accurately. The more English used, the better children understood English words or situations in English. Additionally, the researchers noted key words or clear instruction messages were extremely important to children. They did not need to translate or explain them in Vietnamese language. Young

learners should have opportunities to review old words; then, learn new words, and build their vocabulary. At first, the instructors found challenges in guiding children to learn; they were able to follow instructions and respond comfortably, however. Similarly, data also indicated that students needed to be clearly informed of what the instructors wanted them to do. “Children feel more comfortable and confident when they know what to expect” (Blackmore, 2015).

Learning culture

Together with stories from picture books with characters, stories from new vocabulary helped learners to remember words and learn culture. The instructors noted that sometimes it was necessary to introduce culture when introducing a word or a context. For instance, ‘school bus’ was a new term for young learners in Cao Lanh city; but it was very popular in most states in the United States. Once the teacher told young learners in friendly ways about taking a ‘school bus’, learners were able to know vocabulary and learn the culture of ‘school bus’. In addition, games were mandatory to relate words to real life with learners’ interest, such as real objects and songs. The researchers found that there was a greater focus on pronunciation than grammar because children could imitate easily. “With younger children, there is no need to explicitly teach grammar rules, but instead get them used to hearing and using different grammatical structures in context, for example ‘have got’ when you are talking about someone’s appearance, or ‘must/mustn’t’ when talking about their school rules” (Blackmore, 2015).

Keeping routine reflection

Evidence from the observations showed that routine reflections gave teachers opportunities to evaluate teaching for the betterment. Importantly, it was discovered that keeping reflections was time consuming, but it was worth doing due to its effectiveness improve children’s learning, children’s records, and teachers’ experiences. It was proven to be true in this situation that action research was, “An inquiry approach to teaching that involves a personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement” (York-Barr, J., Sommer, W.A., Ghore, G.S., & Montie, J., 2001).

Conclusion

Through the project which used “Three very important sources of interest for children in the classroom ... pictures, stories, and games: the first being obviously mainly a visual stimulus; the second both visual and aural channels as well as activating language production and sometimes physical movement” (Ur, 2006, p. 288), instructors looked for effective teaching techniques in teaching English language. It was learned that:

Developmental notes

Young learners move from understanding concrete or physical objects to more concepts. In other words, they develop from visual to verbal level with Abstract ideas which require their teachers to prepare activities for their development. Engaging young learners with popular sources creates active learning, active thinking, and active living. It is important to note that teachers' flexible styles and supervision are very important in guiding children to use English effectively. Teachers are always ready to adjust their activities to encourage children to use language creatively.

Reflection notes

Routine reflections allow teachers opportunities to review their teaching so that they are able to adjust classroom activities which bring benefits to teacher effectiveness. For example, when using games, teachers must be very careful in balancing their functions of fun and learning. "Games are essentially recreational 'time out' activities whose main purpose is enjoyment; language study is serious goal-oriented work, whose main purpose is personal learning" (Ur, 2006, p. 289).

Limitation

There should be more evidence if there were observations from more classrooms of young learners. The classroom in the project was small with fewer than 12 young learners who were at elementary school ages. If the class size were bigger, up to around 35 young learners, there would be more evidence on teacher styles in encouraging learners.

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**THE EFFECTS OF PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS
AMONG THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS
AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**

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Abstract

Among the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in learning languages as well as in real life, listening comprises 45% of people's life communication (Worden, 1970). Thus, in order to be a competent language user, people should be effective listeners. In an effort to improve the quality of learning and teaching listening comprehension, this article seeks to examine the benefits of listening support activities, ie. pre-listening activities including vocabulary preview, question preview and topic preparation and a combination of the above. It is also useful to discuss some other elements affecting the efficiency of the pre-listening supports. The result indicated that pre-listening activities offered listeners different benefits.

Keywords: listening, pre-listening activities, effects of pre-listening activities

Introduction

As stated by Vandergrift (2004, p.3), the listening skill is considered as the most challenging in learning language because it is the most implicit and passive skill; thus teaching listening skills plays an important role in teaching and learning a foreign language; however, it does not get enough attention in lots of language classes.

Pre-listening activities are considered to aid both teachers in allowing them to "introduce necessary schematic knowledge and some of the language" in the passage and learners in getting familiar with the topic and language features and calling their existing knowledge (Hegde, 2000, p.247). Furthermore, Elkhafaiti (2005, p.501) concluded that the listening result and comprehension of learners showed improvement after applying pre-listening activities. Chang and Read (2008, p.18, 19) put an emphasis on the effect of reducing students' anxiety during listening time. However, among all materials the authors found, there is no reference aimed at the combination of three pre-listening activities including vocabulary preview, question preview and topic preparation. Recognizing the gap, the authors decided to conduct a study to examine the effects of three pre-listening activities and the combination of these three activities on the listening comprehension of 1st year non-major students at the Advanced Education Program (AEP) of Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry (TUAF), which uses 100% English in teaching and learning. Therefore, students spend the first year on learning general English and IELTS so that they are able to get a score of 4.5 after this academic school year.

Via this research, the teachers can determine the advantages and disadvantages of three pre-listening activities and the combination of the three of them, leading to their choice of

using listening supports in their teaching. When it comes to students, they can be better prepared for a listening task; thus, they can expose the better results as well.

The Research

Context

There were 32 students who were at the first year (in the second half of the first term in general English) invited to join in the research. The level of students varies from starter to elementary. All of them had passed the mid-term exam some weeks before and were divided into 4 groups of 8 members.

Research Question

In evaluating the innovation, the authors are going to answer the following question:

To what extent do the three pre-listening activities and the combination of these three activities affect 1st year non-major students at AEP?

Methodology

In term of methods of the research, the authors applied qualitative methodology which is known for dealing with soft data like words instead of numbers. This methodology employs a bottom-up approach, which is done by collecting data first then drawing it to theory.

Methods

Documents

By using this means of data collection, the authors aimed at investigating their students' listening comprehension through three listening tasks.

In this stage, students participated in three listening classes. Each class dealt with a different listening passage, yet the same kind of exercise – ie. filling in the gaps. There are 10 blanks in each exercise, which are taken from New Headway Elementary third edition. Beginning each listening class, participants in each group were prepared with one kind of pre-listening support, then completed a fill-in-the-gap task.

Focus groups

This section was conducted after the listening classes. Students were made to gather in a group and discuss the positive and negative points of the pre-listening activity they got in all three classes.

Research Data and Data Analysis

Students' Listening Comprehension

The tables below show the result of listening tasks and students' opinions in focus groups in terms of listening comprehension.

Table 1: Score of all 4 groups from the first listening passage (**Listening passage 1**)

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre-listening activity											
Vocabulary preview	-	-	1	2	3	-	2	-	-	-	-
Question preview	1	3	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Topic preparation	1	-	3	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	-
Combination	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	1	1	-

Table 2: Score of all 4 groups from the first listening passage (**Listening passage 2**)

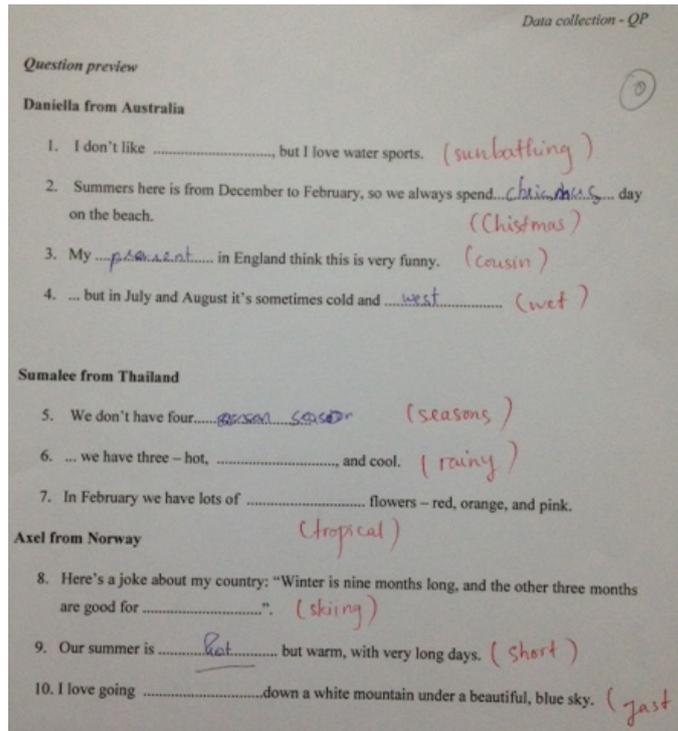
Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre-listening activity											
Vocabulary preview	-	-	-	3	3	-	2	-	-	-	-
Question preview	-	3	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Topic preparation	-	-	4	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	-
Combination	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	-	1	1	-

Table 3: Score of all 4 groups from the first listening passage (**Listening passage 3**)

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre-listening activity											
Vocabulary preview	-	-	-	2	4	1	1		-	-	-
Question preview	-	1	2	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Topic preparation	-	1	3	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	-
Combination	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	1	1	-

From the tables we can see that those who got *vocabulary preview* as the pre-listening activity showed a score from 3 to 6 correct items in 10. The results varied a little in three listening tasks, yet generally, only 1 or 2 students get the highest grade of 6 despite expressing that “I think it is easier for me as I know the pronunciation of words and I can grab the words quickly”.

In terms of *question preview*, it appeared to benefit the students under the research the least. The score ranges from 0 to 4 for all three listening tasks. For some students who gained 0 or 1 correct items, they were able to write down some words, yet they all were wrong in spelling, as shown in an example below. For blanks number (2), (4), (5), and (9), this student seemed to get the sound of the words but they could not determine the words. Additionally, words in gaps number (1), (6), (8), and (10) appeared to be new for them as they were not able to write anything.



The score of *topic preparation* exposed a larger range of scores (from 0 to 7) than the two other means of support. Some of the students who got quite good results expressed that they could guess some words based on the discussion about the picture and topic. One student added “I can imagine the passage and catch the idea of the listening record”.

With respect to a *combination of three pre-listening activities*, students showed quite positive grades and opinions about their comprehension. Learners in this category got the highest score of 9 in 10 questions and the lowest of 4. For each listening passage, there was 1 student who got the highest score of 9, but the wrong answer was lacking a plural ending or getting the wrong sound.

One of them stated that “I find it totally useful because I can accumulate not only vocabulary, but also can guess how they match to the listening via talking about picture”. There was an idea that each type of pre-listening activity provided them a piece of information and then by matching all pieces, they become quite clear about the upcoming listening passage and finish the task quickly in two sessions of listening.

Students' Engagement

Students' involvement in the classes. For all three groups of *vocabulary preview*, *question preview* and *topic preparation*, they did not show much engagement. A student said “I couldn't engage much in the listening as I couldn't figure out what the guys were speaking and didn't know much about the text”. 75%, 87,5 % and 62,5 % of students from vocabulary preview, question preview and topic preparation, respectively shared the same thinking.

Nonetheless, the situation seemed to change remarkably for the last group of combination. 80 percent of students in this group gave a positive opinion about their engagement. The reasons they provided are due to the familiarity of the text after the pre-task stage.

Students' Difficulties

One of the limitations of the *vocabulary preview group* is that they concentrated too much on the new words in the list. A member said that “I just focused too much on the new words and tried to find them in the listening passage, so I couldn’t pay attention to the other words and missed a lot of blanks”.

For the *question preview group*, they did not find it easy to complete as they did not really understand the questions. A boy said that “we can’t grab the question as we are not familiar with reading the question quickly and catching the idea of the question”.

Participants in the *topic preparation group* tackled some drawbacks since they were controlled by thinking too much about the picture and topic leading to forgetting to concentrate on the questions and misunderstanding them. They shared, “all pictures ruled my mind nearly all the listening time.”

Though all students who received a *combination of all three pre-listening activities* shared the same ideas of advantages, there was still one opinion that the pre-listening support was too long and they were a bit bored. However, some of them said that “it was not necessary to cut one activity, but reduce the time scale for topic preparation. I think it was a bit long.”

Discussion

First of all, from the result of students’ scores and discussion, the authors get quite a clear and deep understanding about the effects of each type of pre-listening activities and the combination as well. Vocabulary preview provides the first group with spelling, pronunciation, meaning and uses of the words that helps them in identifying words in the listening passage. Question preview gives them the general idea of the listening passage and they can determine what they are going to listen to. Topic preparation makes the learners familiar with the topic and they can get some new information or recall some related words. However, all of these three groups showed lower scores than the fourth group, which got the combination of all three pre-listening activities. This not only prepares vocabulary but also creates a better understanding about the upcoming listening tasks. At the same time, the researchers also found out the weakness of each pattern.

Conclusion

EFL students tackle numerous problems in acquiring all fields of a new language. Being non-major students, they meet quite a lot of difficulties, particularly with listening skills. The paper is aimed at helping them enhance their listening capacity. With the methods

used, all of them gave an idea that they knew exactly what they had to do before listening and that they could get better comprehension. Nevertheless, this action research was conducted in a small-scale environment so it is not possible to generalize the research.

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THE USE OF VIETNAMESE IN THE EFL CLASSROOMS FOR ENGLISH MAJORS: TEACHERS' ATTITUDES

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of English teachers towards their use of Vietnamese in the English classroom for EFL major students by analyzing the classroom language choices made by 12 teachers of English at different colleges and universities in Vietnam. Both quantitative data (questionnaires) and qualitative data (open-ended items in questionnaires and interviews) were examined. The findings show that the majority of the respondents held supportive attitudes towards the role of Vietnamese to serve several particular functions. The findings also put the emphasis on students' target language level as one of the decisive factors for the amount of Vietnamese used in the English classroom.

Keywords: Vietnamese, native language, English majored students, attitudes, target language

Introduction

English language teaching has undergone various methods and approaches, each of which has recognized the role of students' native language (L1) in teaching and learning the target language (TL) at different degrees. The policy of teaching English through English has been implemented in various ESL/EFL contexts (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Wigglesworth, 2005); however, mismatches between official recommendations and the actual teaching practices in the language classrooms have been reported (Wigglesworth, 2005). Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of using L1 in teaching TL, many of which showed a positive role of L1 in the TL classroom. Based on Kieu's study (2010), which involved the participants from only one city in Vietnam and dealt with the teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1 for university students in general, the present paper aims to further investigate the attitudes of college and university teachers from different parts of Vietnam towards their use of Vietnamese in the English classroom for college or university students who are doing an EFL major. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help English teachers find out an effective way of using L1 in the TL classroom to improve the quality of English language learning and teaching.

Debate over the use of L1 in the TL learning

The debate over teacher use of L1 in the TL classroom has been addressed by numerous researchers. Those who support a monolingual approach believe that the TL classroom should be a monolingual environment in which only the TL is used as a means of instruction. Advocating this principle, Krashen (1985) believed that learners should have as much exposure to the TL as possible and can successfully acquire a second language merely by being exposed to comprehensible input of the TL. Regarding a bilingual approach, it is argued that the exclusive use of TL would almost never be achieved but could be “a hindrance to classroom interaction, negotiation and meaningful communication” (Victor, 2009). Phillipson (1992, cited in Kieu, 2010) claims that the success of TL learning may be the result of other significant factors such as the quality of teaching materials, teachers and teaching methods rather than mere maximal TL input. In other words, the amount of TL input is not a guarantee of academic success since merely being exposed to the TL input does not ensure that learners can internalize the input to become intake (Sharwood-Smith, 1985, cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002).

Empirical studies on the role of L1 in the TL learning

The impact of using L1 in the TL classroom has been the focus of interest of numerous researchers. Levine (2003) carried out a study on 600 FL students and 163 FL instructors from the United States and Canada. The analysis of an Internet-based questionnaire showed that there is a negative correlation between the quantity of the TL use and the level of students’ TL-use anxiety. Teachers believed that their students would be likely to feel more uncomfortable in a learning environment where much TL is used while in actuality students reported feeling less anxious when exposed to an increased quantity of the TL. On the contrary, learners of French in Victor’s study (2009) reported feeling comfortable and confident when using their L1 in the TL class. Additionally, Nguyen (2012) argues that L1 can be used in the TL class to help create a non-threatening learning environment.

Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) explored the view of beginning learners of French (TL) in Australia on the use of L1 over the TL within an environment where learners are expected to make the maximal use of the TL. The participants showed their preference in using L1 to facilitate their understanding of vocabulary and grammar and comprehension of classroom management though they were aware of some drawbacks of L1 use in terms of the possibility of lacking exposure to TL, overusing L1 and depending on L1. Kieu (2010) and Victor (2009) agree that L1 can be considered as an efficient resource in the enhancement of TL acquisition provided that it is not abused and is appropriately manipulated to fit the teaching contexts.

Regarding the practices of L1 use, Edstrom (2006) carried out a case study based on a teacher's analysis of her English (L1) use in teaching Spanish for university-level students. The teacher and students perceived that L1 appeared to be beneficial for the students' TL acquisition. In addition, Stapa and Majid (2009) found that ESL learners with low English proficiency showed significant improvement in their writing performance when they were allowed to use L1 to generate ideas during their writing process. Interestingly, Victor (2009) reported that the students in his study, particularly those with high level French competency, also showed a preference of using L1 in the TL classroom.

In conclusion, the use of L1 in the second or foreign language classroom has been the focus of ongoing debates. Generally, it is revealed that L1 is deemed as a beneficial resource in the TL classroom in specific teaching situations and in the process of student second language acquisition. As a result, it is advisable that L1 be treated as a resource rather than a hindrance for the success of second or foreign language learning (Cook, 2001, cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). However, teacher overuse of L1 in their pedagogy is likely to lead to learner de-motivation in their learning (MacDonald, 1993, cited in Turnbull & Arnett, 2002); therefore, teachers should balance the use of L1 in classroom so that they can make the maximal use of the target language.

Research question

The current study aims to investigate the following question:

What are the teachers' attitudes towards their use of Vietnamese in teaching English to college or university students doing an EFL major?

Methodology

Participants and context

Twelve Vietnamese college and university teachers of English (2 males and 10 females) participated in this study. The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 36 ($M=29.16$, $SD=3.92$) and their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 14 years ($M = 6.75$, $SD=4.18$). Ten of the teachers have completed their Master's degrees and the other two got Bachelor's degrees. The participants came from different colleges and universities in Vietnam (4 from the North, 6 from the Center, and 2 from the South).

Data collection procedures

In order to collect the data, a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted to ask the teachers to indicate the main reasons why they use Vietnamese in certain situations and their attitudes towards the use of Vietnamese in teaching English for English majored students. The questionnaire was designed with closed- and open-ended

questions and some of the items were designed by using the Likert scale, i.e. from “Very rarely” to “Very frequently”. The content of the questionnaire survey and interview was adapted from that in Kieu’s study (2010). The questionnaire survey was emailed to all 12 teachers. Then two of the teachers were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews aiming to cross-check the questionnaire data and to collect further information about the teachers’ attitudes towards the topic. Each interview lasted within approximately 10 minutes and was audiotaped.

Data analysis procedures

After collecting the data, the authors assigned each participant with a code number. A descriptive statistics test was conducted by using SPSS to examine how frequently teachers believe they use Vietnamese in suggested teaching situations in the English classroom. The interviews were manually transcribed into text. Then a qualitative content analysis was conducted to code and interpret the data from the questionnaire and interviews in terms of commonalities and differences, searching for emerging themes and patterns.

Results and analysis

The findings revealed that the usefulness of Vietnamese is perceived differently in different teaching situations. The majority of the participants believed that Vietnamese should not be overused by teachers in English classrooms for college or university students doing an EFL major.

*Table 1: Frequency of use of Vietnamese in some teaching situations
(1=very rarely; 2=rarely; 3=sometimes; 4=frequently; 5=very frequently)*

Situations in which Vietnamese is used	Frequency (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. explaining meanings of new words		16.7	83.3		
b. explaining complex grammatical points		25.0	66.7		8.3
c. communicating complex ideas		8.3	50.0	25.0	16.7
d. giving instructions about activities	33.3	50.0	16.7		
e. checking for comprehension	33.3	58.3	8.3		
f. giving feedback	16.7	58.3	8.3	16.7	
g. generating students’ ideas	25.0	50.0	16.7	8.3	

As shown in the table, teachers believed Vietnamese can be more helpful in explaining meanings of complicated new words, grammatical points, and ideas. On other occasions such as giving instructions about activities, checking for understanding, giving feedback, and

generating students' ideas, the majority of the teachers reported preferring using English more often. The following sessions provide detailed descriptions and examples for each situation.

Teaching situations in which Vietnamese is perceived to be useful

To explain meaning of new words

The majority of teachers reported that they sometimes use L1 to explain the meaning of Abstract new words or words with complicated denotations or connotations. Teachers believed that by resorting to L1, they can help their students, especially students with a low level of English proficiency, clarify the meaning of the words more easily. For example, a teacher stated, "If the words are passive and Abstract, L1 helps better."

To explain complex grammatical points

Some teachers admitted that their students and they themselves sometimes found it difficult to present some complicated grammatical points in English; therefore, they tended to resort to L1. Using L1 in such cases can help make the TL learning less painful. In the words of a teacher, he stated, "Some complex grammatical points need pointing out explicitly in Vietnamese so that students can understand them more easily." Another teacher said that she felt "more confident and easier to use L1 to help students grasp the rule."

To communicate complex ideas

The majority of teachers reported they often resorted to Vietnamese to explain complex ideas as they believed that if English was used, students would possibly get confused due to their limited English proficiency. As stated by a teacher, "It's challenging [for students] to catch up with complex ideas expressed in students' target language, even with ones explained in their first language." Another teacher stated, "Since some teachers are not good at explaining, using Vietnamese can make things become simpler."

Teaching situations in which English is perceived to be more useful

To give instructions of activities

Interestingly, most participants believed that it is not a good idea to give instructions of the activities in Vietnamese. Effective instructions should be made simple and understandable. Teachers reported that for instructions with complicated procedures and steps, only after students failed to get the instructions in the target language did teachers resort to the students' mother tongue. A teacher stated, "It's not a good idea. Instructions for activities tend to be simple. Vietnamese should be very rarely used."

To check students' comprehension

Using L1 to check students' understanding is not preferred by the teachers in this study. The teachers reported that they only use L1 in this case to confirm whether students understand complex instructions, ideas or words. In this situation, the use of L1 is believed to be merely beneficial for students with low levels of English. An interviewee said, "I only use L1 with very low level students."

To give feedback

75% of the participants indicated that they very rarely or rarely used Vietnamese in giving feedback to students. In the case of students with low levels of English, feedback in Vietnamese may help them to have better direction in what they are doing or to know exactly how their teachers evaluate their performance.

To generate students' ideas

Most of the participants reported rarely using L1 to generate students' ideas when they conducted speaking or writing activities. L1 should only be used when students have a very low level of English competence to enable them to brainstorm ideas on complex issues or topics. "I only use Vietnamese in the class where students have very low level of English. It can help them have more ideas to speak or to write", a teacher stated.

General attitudes towards the use of Vietnamese in teaching English

When asked about how frequently they use Vietnamese in teaching English for English major college or university students, 83.3% of the participants believed that Vietnamese should be used 'sometimes', 16.7% stated that teachers should use it very rarely or rarely. An interviewee said, "For English majors, I prefer to use English in the class for the majority of time. However, we should not be rigid. In some cases, Vietnamese should be resorted to providing that it does not create a bad habit of using Vietnamese in the class." Similarly, another teacher added, "Translation somehow is more useful with lower level students. With university students, especially with students majoring in English, the use of Vietnamese in teaching English should be reduced as much as possible."

Discussion

The teachers in this study showed their similar attitudes towards the use of Vietnamese in teaching English for college or university students doing an EFL major. The majority of them believed that Vietnamese is beneficial in some suggested teaching situations such as presenting Abstract or complicated words, grammatical points and ideas. In other suggested situations such as giving instructions for activities, checking students' understanding, giving feedback and generating students' ideas, teachers believed that the use of English should be maximized. Teachers also felt that Vietnamese should not often be resorted to in the classroom with students majoring in English as the mother tongue is

considered to be more supportive for students of lower English levels. The findings also revealed that teachers might resort to L1 when they lack confidence in presenting the points in English.

Conclusion

The results revealed that teachers personally believed that when they teach English to college or university students doing an EFL major, Vietnamese could be helpful to serve several functions. The teachers' use of L1 in teaching the TL is also believed to be associated with their confidence in their own TL competence. Additionally, teachers believed that Vietnamese could be used in cases of complexity but should not be overused in teaching English for EFL major students as these students are expected to be proficient enough to be able to conduct most of the required learning activities in the target language.

The findings of this study were similar in some aspects to other related studies in terms of teachers' positive attitudes towards the use of L1 in teaching the TL to serve particular functions and students' TL level as one of the decisive factors for the amount of L1 use in the TL classroom. However, while the majority of the participants in Kieu's (2010) study tended to use English frequently in checking students' understanding and giving feedback, the teachers' in the current study believed that these situations should be conducted in English. The findings in this study also showed that the frequency of Vietnamese use in teaching English might be associated to teachers' confidence. Further research should be done to examine the actual effectiveness of the use of Vietnamese in the situations which these teachers highly supported.

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DEVELOPING LOCAL STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF BODY LANGUAGE INTERACTION WHEN GIVING SECOND LANGUAGE PRESENTATIONS AT QUANG BINH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Much attention has been paid to teaching University students to develop their practical skills. Giving a second language presentation could be regarded as one of the key skills which might motivate learners in doing practical works. There could be various helpful ways of giving presentations which are performed by different students; however, the majority of them mainly focus on necessary procedures of the presentation. There is a very important aspect that may play a potential role of achieving a successful presentation –interaction. Different types of interaction such as oral interaction or body language interaction could be useful to reach broader aims of communication. This paper is to present the effectiveness of using body language interaction in second language presentations. Based on the paper's given information, the author expects to develop local students' awareness in applying body language interaction when giving second language presentations in Quang Binh University.

Keywords: presentation, body language, second language.

Introduction

For most of us, the thought of making a presentation in front of our peers causes significant anxiety. It could be from the lack of strong content, lack of evidence to support what has been mentioned, or it is from lowered confidence when facing a crowd. Many educational researchers show their interest in improving students' presentation skills by drawing out the needed demands such as content, voice, pace, intonation, pronunciation and interaction. Interaction should be considered the most useful way to decide how effective a good presentation is. Interaction is important in public presentation because it involves your audience being more direct with both you as speaker and your content. An involved and engaged audience is more likely to pay attention to you and connect with your words. Body language interaction is understood as non-verbal interaction, which plays a very important role in giving second language presentation that seems to be applied popularly in teaching a foreign language. Specific gestures and facial expressions could definitely help your audience more fully comprehend a given message when the mother tongue is not permitted to be spoken. However, there are not many students who recognize the significance of this interaction type. Also, teaching and training body language in presenting are not performed positively. Quang Binh students of English as second

language could be regarded as powerful evidence. They rarely use non-verbal communication when giving presentations. This paper is conducted by observing and interviewing 20 EFL students randomly. The paper expects to be a unique sign to encourage those local students to develop their presentation skills. Thanks to the findings, students themselves can increase their awareness of using body language interaction in giving second language presentations.

Background knowledge

1. *Second language presentation*

A presentation is a means of communication that can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team. Speaking in a foreign language can be a challenge to non-native speakers—giving a presentation in a foreign language makes that challenge more difficult. Many language students assume that presenting in a second language can seem like an insurmountable task. Therefore, whether you're presenting to your classmates, your co-workers, or your community, the strong effort in preparation should be emphasized carefully.

2. *Interaction and non-verbal interaction*

In the literature regarding interaction in the classroom, there have been many articles and studies debating the definition of the term “interaction”. “Interaction occurs whenever a person attempts to send a message or whenever a person perceives and assigns meaning to behaviour” (Frey et.al. 2000). Wagner (1994) indicates that “An interaction is an event which takes place between a learner and learner’s environment. Its purpose is to respond to the learner in a way intended to change his or her behavior toward educational goals (p.8)”.

There are verbal and non-verbal interactions in responding to a language classroom in which Samovar and his colleagues showed that “Nonverbal Interaction involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver” (Samovar et.al. 2007:197).

3. *The importance of body language interaction in presentation*

Many criteria should be given in evaluating the result and success of a presentation. The majority of presenters pay much attention to their voice, ideas, and intonation. The interaction with body language has not received enough awareness.

A vital and visible part of your presentation is the use of body language. It can be a factor to make or break a public speaker. Body language can be used to deliver your message with power. It helps to support what you have said in your presentation or it can distract and cause you to lose your audience. If your body language denies your belief in the message you are presenting, you will come off as less credible and fail in your efforts at public speaker.

The local students’ awareness of using body language interaction when giving a second language presentation

In reality, teaching presentation has not been achieved successfully in Quang Binh University. There are many reasons which cause the difficulties in second language presentation. It could be from the students' negative attitude or traditional thought of machine presentation. The results are obtained from different data collection types of observation and interview which were implemented in 4 classes of the English Department. Those classes have approached presentation as the usual method for teaching business writing, interpreting and speaking skills. The findings show that most of the students do not pay much attention to their body language when giving a presentation. In their point of view, content of the presentation and pronunciation are the most important things. Thus, they try their best to have well- prepared slides (in case they present with a projector) and good pronunciation. They rarely give interaction in their whole presentation or interaction that could be presented only by question and answer. The observations taken bring the author to a conclusion that there is no awareness of using body language interaction in giving presentation to EFL students at Quang Binh University.

The interviews had been conducted then with the aim of understanding the reason why students use no body language in their presentation. It is not out of the writer's prediction, many of them expressed their opinion that giving a presentation is showing their thinking about an issue and there is no necessity for interaction. Some other students believed that verbal interaction is enough and easy to understand, so they hardly think about non-verbal interaction. On the other hand, very few students could acknowledge the significance of using body language in their presentation. They said "body language can help us to interact with listeners by using eye contact or gestures. It could be more effective than a thousand words in some situations". They also showed their anxiety: "even we understand the importance of body language in presentation, but speaking in public makes us nervous and we thus forget to use the body language or use it unnaturally".

From this collected information, we could easily generalize that students' awareness of using body language in giving presentation is still limited. As the role of educators who directly instruct EFL students with their presentations, Quang Binh educators should find themselves encouragement in designing useful methodologies of teaching and training second language presentation.

Developing local students' awareness of using body language interaction when giving second language presentation

As mentioned above about presentation and body language interaction in giving presentation, we can recognize the meaningful role of interaction in public speaking. Interaction plays a key part in helping a speaker and listeners to understand each other. Interaction could be regarded as the tool to make the presentation communicative. The understanding is not from speaking only; it is also from responding to the speakers' words.

They hold the interest, attention, concentration and response of audience. Interaction is performed by verbal and non-verbal interaction in presenting. In reality, there is much attention to verbal interaction by the usual method of question and answer. Non-verbal or body language interaction has held the interest of teachers and students of EFL. Obviously, what we are doing physically with our bodies speaks louder than our words. Body language tells us a great deal. Your body communicates different impressions on the audience. People not only listen to you, they also watch you. Body language can help presenters show something valuable that he could not use words to describe. Therefore, teachers who are teaching in Quang Binh English Department must make clear the role of body language interaction in second language presentation. These roles are classified by body movement and gesture, eye contact, and facial expressions which are popular in interaction. Developing local students' awareness of those body language interaction tools could be seen as priority in teaching second language presentation.

1. Body movement and gesture

We communicate by the way we walk, stand, sit, what we do with our shoulders, hands, arms, and legs, how we hold our heads, and the manner in which we position our bodies toward or away from others. Most of these things contribute to creating a communicative presentation or speech. Movements will be able to help as a new idea is brought out in your performance.

Your use of gesture is of course another way of involving your audience in your presentation. Audiences respond well to the physical energy and enthusiasm being conveyed by a presenter, and thus the use of clear and controlled gestures will greatly enhance your presentation. Gestures that are open and reach out to your audience serve to extend your presentation to them and thus help them feel more involved. If you stand at the front with your hands in your pockets you will, quite literally, not be reaching out to them and this will again impede the effectiveness of your talk.

2. Eye Contact

The eyes are the most dominant and reliable features of the face and provide a constant channel of communication. They serve as the major decisive factor in deciphering the spoken truth. Unlike other parts of the face, eyes can both send and receive messages. It is believed that eye contact may help connect speaker and individual or groups. This helps to regulate the flow of communication. It signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility. Speakers who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility. Local students who have not realized this might be hesitant when looking at the people who are listening to them.

3. Facial expression

Facial expression plays a very important role in showing the emotion of a speaker and audience. By looking at the audience's facial expression, the speaker can easily know what thing they have understood and what they are wondering. That could be seen as the most convenient method of interaction in presentation. For example, smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking. So, if you smile frequently you will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm, and approachable. There are at least six facial expressions that are innate, universal and carry the same basic meaning throughout the world: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise. "Facial expression

- reflects course of action
- conveys messages of social submissiveness and dominance
- tells others how interested you are
- signals your degree of involvement
- indicates your level of comprehension about the moment
- divulges whether or not your reactions are spontaneous or managed" (Samovar 2007:208)

By mastering and deeply understanding those body language interaction types, students themselves can run their presentation meaningfully and communicatively.

Conclusion and implications

Using body language interaction is really necessary when giving a presentation. Your use of eye contact, gesture, spoken language and energy should communicate effectively and enthusiastically with all areas of the room, thus ensuring that the audience receives positive messages about you and your posture. Local students have not been provided enough awareness of the importance of body language interaction in their presentation; therefore, their performance results are quite far reaching at communicative goals. The most important thing is to help students develop their own cognition of non-verbal interaction in responding to an audience. The combination between verbal interaction and body language interaction will definitely contribute to a successful presentation. The author also expects that this paper could help teachers of EFL in their teaching methodology of giving presentations. In their own way, they could apply non-verbal interaction in developing their students' presentation skills.

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IDENTIFICATION OF THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN PROMOTING COOPERATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

As the concept of learners' cooperation has never become outdated, even in the modern hi-tech context of ELT, this study aims to investigate the functions of a language teacher who wishes to foster cooperative learning. In order to satisfy all of the elements needed for successful cooperation among learners, the language teacher is supposed to make a crucial movement from the traditional role of a controller to a different classroom figure with simultaneously various functions, e.g. resourcefully facilitating groups' learning, seriously monitoring the collaborative process, occasionally giving necessary interventions to problematic groups, or flexibly re-structuring the existing curriculum, and so on. In other words, there is now a multidimensional identity to be adopted by the teacher so that the true essence of academic collaboration can be fully exploited in an EFL classroom.

Keywords: cooperative learning, multidimensional identity, teacher's role

Introduction

With a view to helping learners develop their basic competence required for academic and vocational success in the modern world, the contemporary ELT community has greatly directed their attention to a broad set of the twenty-first century skills, namely critical thinking, problem solving, technological literacy, global awareness, etc. Among them, communication and collaboration also need to be taken into enormous consideration. As learning is a fundamentally social activity, it is thus necessary for today's students to possess the ability to work effectively in teams and make contributions to the accomplishment of a common goal (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). This explains why teamwork never seems obsolete, even though an average student can now learn just by sitting alone in front of a laptop screen and joining online courses which, according to Bird (2014) and Zomick (2014), offer a great deal of convenience and flexibility. Inspired by the awareness of significant collaboration in class, this study goes to theoretically examine the specific roles typically associated with language teachers who wish to maximize the merits of truly cooperative learning for students' sake.

Theoretical framework

Cooperative Learning (CL)

Definition

Unlike the conventional lecture-based method in which learning is an externally driven process in a teacher-dominated presentation format (Doucet et. al., 1998, as cited in Ali, 2011, p.51), CL can be generally understood as ‘an instructional strategy in which students work actively and purposefully together in small groups to enhance both their own and their teammates’ learning’ (Abrami, Poulsen, & Chamber, 2004, as cited in Ahmad & Mahmood, 2010, p.152). According to Johnson and Johnson (2014), CL can be contrasted with competitive learning, i.e. students work against each other to achieve an academic goal, and individualistic learning, i.e. students work on their own to reach an academic target unrelated to those of other students. Such explanations, albeit understandable, may still lead to some confusions as to whether CL really differs from group work regularly found in many language classrooms. At this point, the meaning of CL needs to be clarified as opposed to traditional use of group-based activities. Merely having students sit together, as Johnson and Johnson (1999) stated, does not necessarily make them form a cooperative group, and educators must keep in mind the basic elements that constitute the proper nature of CL. Whereas traditional learning groups usually suffer from the serious lack of learning commitment, or processing of group functioning, etc. (‘Traditional versus Cooperative Groups,’ n.d.), CL is developed upon the theoretical roots of behaviorist, social, cognitive psychology (Jacobs, Lee, & Ball, 1997), and characterized by four key principles, known as PIES, i.e. Positive interdependence – Individual accountability – Equal participation – Simultaneously interaction (Kagan,2005). Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1991) proposed another variation of CL’s basic elements, including: Positive interdependence – Face-to-face promotive interaction – Individual accountability – Interpersonal and Small group skills – Group processing. Despite some minor differences, these theories apparently experience many similarities. After all, students in a cooperative group are actively engaged in learning activities through their complementary and interconnected roles, through each person’s responsibility for an equal portion of a common task, through the maximization of in-class interaction and the guarantee that no members can avoid making contributions. In a nutshell, ‘cooperative learning is a part of a group of teaching / learning techniques where students interact with each other to acquire and practice the elements of a subject matter and to meet common learning goals. It is much more than just putting students into groups and hoping for the best.’

(Macpherson, 2015)

Classification

According to Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1998a, 1998b, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1999, pp. 68-69), cooperative groups can be generally divided into three major categories, based on the purpose of group formation. Firstly, a formal cooperative learning group consists of students working together to achieve a shared learning goal or complete a specific given task (e.g. conducting an experiment, writing a report), for either one class period or several weeks. Secondly, an informal cooperative learning group is a temporary, ad hoc one where students work together to achieve a learning goal for a few minutes, one discussion or a class period. The aims of informal cooperation in class are to focus students' attention to the learning material, or to set the mood conducive for learning. The final type is identified as a cooperative base group. This is a long-term, heterogeneous group with stable membership, intended to give support and assistance needed for each member's progress, and personalize the school experience through a caring extended relationship among members that may last at least a semester, a year or even longer. The larger the class and the more complex the subject matter, the more important it is to have base groups.

In addition, all of these three CL types can be reasonably integrated into one class period (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). A typical class session of this kind is likely to start with students meeting in their base groups in order to insure each member's understanding of the materials and get prepared for the class session. Next, during the lecturing stage, informal cooperative learning groups are to be utilized to help students cognitively construct the knowledge. The class period is then followed by formal cooperative learning activities, where all members have to work toward a specific task completion. At this stage, the teacher observes the groups and assists them in using interpersonal skills to work together effectively. Near the termination of the class period, informal cooperative learning is applied once more to provide closure to the lesson. Lastly, the cooperative base groups meet to do the reviewing, e.g. what is the most important thing they have learnt, what homework has been assigned, what the members may need to finish the homework, and so on.

Opportunities and Challenges

Based on the attributes discussed above, the literature has also indicated some beneficial potentialities as well as unexpected setbacks embedded in cooperative language learning. Specifically, CL helps to give students an increased sense of self-esteem and responsibility, reinforce their critical thinking through discussion-based activities, get them more self-motivated, and engage students in an enjoyable and interactive learning experience (Olsen, n.d.), especially in the area of English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learning where the teaching-learning process aims at enhancing both linguistic and communicative competence of learners. As Cohen (1994, as cited in Ahmad & Mahmood, 2010, p.152)

suggested, CL strategies also contribute to the promotion of higher order thinking, interracial acceptance and socially acceptable behavior. Another attractive power of CL lies in the fact that ‘any learning task in any subject area with any curriculum may be structured cooperatively’ (Johnson & Johnson, 2014). Nevertheless, the issues of incompatibility, resistance, noise levels are also likely to occur (‘Cooperative Learning,’ n.d.) in the middle of group work or at the transitional stage between conventional lecture-based approach and cooperation-oriented method. As well, the challenges concerning the way teachers are trained to control the communication channels, organize the curriculum, or make personal commitment to sustain their effort partially prevent teachers from embracing CL in their classes (Kohn, 1992, as cited in Gillies & Boyles, 2009).

Teacher’s roles in a cooperative language classroom

Wang (2007) distinguished the disparity in the teacher’s role between conventional and cooperative language teaching by means of underlying principles. While traditional classrooms are behaviorism-affected, teacher-dominated, formal, and impersonal, with the focus on drills and one-way transmit of knowledge, the teaching style in cooperative classes is highly student-centered and social constructivism-based, with the inclusion of several relevant activities involving teamwork skills and two-way communication. Accordingly, if language teachers aspire to become successful in promoting cooperative learning among students, it is necessary for them to make remarkable changes on their functions. Instead of being the controller with the central authority in class, teachers are now supposed to adopt several simultaneous roles, namely an observer, an adviser (McDonell, 1992, as cited in Wang, 2007, p.24), a student trainer in terms of academic and social skills, or even a producer of new classroom curricula (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2008, as cited in Gillies & Boyle, 2009, p.934), which somehow fits the idea suggested by Johnson and Johnson (2008, chap. 1) that ‘ideally, teachers are trained to take their existing lessons and restructure them to be cooperative.’ This seems to require highly pedagogical competence on the part of language teachers. At the same time, they need to become ‘facilitators and resource persons’ who must do initial researching into the materials to be learnt, specify the objectives of the lesson, explain the task and collaborative process to the groups, etc. (‘Cooperative Learning,’ 1994).

In general, Coxx (n.d.) listed a few activities that have to be done by a teacher in a cooperation-based language classroom, including arranging students to sit in small clusters, considering the best group size for the class, assigning students to heterogeneous groups, providing appropriate materials, stating expectations clearly via specific exemplification or modeling, structuring individual roles within each group (e.g. task leader, time manager, researcher, recorder, fact checker, material keeper), circulating around the room to constantly monitor the collaboration process, intervening sometimes to answer students’

questions or teach them necessary skills, as well as evaluating each students based on how well he / she helps the group to finish the task.

In particular, Johnson and Johnson (2008, chap. 1) provided another alternatively specified identification of the teacher's roles according to the three particular CL categories:

Table: Teacher's roles in three categories of CL groups (Johnson & Johnson, 2008, chap. 1)

Types of CL group	Teacher's functions
<p style="text-align: center;">Formal cooperative learning group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Making pre-instructional decision: formulating objectives – deciding on group size – assigning students to groups – assigning roles to group members – making arrangements on classroom and materials ❖ Explaining instructional tasks and cooperative structure, including: academic assignment, criteria for success, intergroup cooperation, students' expected behaviors / social skills ❖ Monitoring students' learning and providing assistance in: successful task completion and effective group skills ❖ Assessing students' learning and helping them process how well their group functioned: evaluating quality and quantity of achievement –having students make an improvement plan – having them celebrate hard work
<p style="text-align: center;">Informal cooperative learning group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizing focused discussions before and after the lesson (i.e. bookends) ▪ Interspersing pair discussions throughout the lesson ▪ Making the tasks explicit and precise ▪ Requiring the groups to produce a specific product
<p style="text-align: center;">Cooperative base group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Forming heterogeneous groups (of three or four) ➤ Scheduling the time for regular meeting ➤ Creating specific agendas with concrete tasks that provide a routine for students to follow ➤ Having students periodically process their effectiveness of their base groups

However, the implementation of CL in a language classroom, with its typical features and other actual social constraints, may become a tough job for teachers. Having interviewed some EFL professors and observed the genuine CL environment, Wang (2007) pointed out several difficulties possibly confronting the teacher. The very first problem to tackle is class management since students may get distracted and then make a lot of chaotic noise. Especially for large class size, the teacher may have to experience heavy workload of activity design and material preparation. Moreover, as the absence of some students may

seriously affect the group performance and cooperative atmosphere of the whole class, students' attendance need to be strictly ensured. Last but not least, the teacher needs to give some careful thought to students' difficulty in adapting themselves to CL situations, their tendency toward mother tongue during discussions, as well as the issue of having an effective assessment method. Finding ways to properly address these problems should thus be one of the greatest concerns of EFL teachers in the attempt to get the most out of CL.

Although the literature 'provides mixed recommendations' on this matter (Chinn & Chinn, 2009), researchers and scholars have widely agreed upon the fact that language teachers' functions in cooperation-based educational contexts bear very little resemblance to what they traditionally do in lecture – note-taking classrooms as they are now essentially supposed to facilitate students' learning in a less directive and more interactive way that helps to support their language-producing endeavor. To sum up, if all of the aforementioned knowledge has to be well condensed, it should be like the way King (1993) wrote about the shift of the teacher's roles: from a 'sage on the stage' to a 'guide on the side'.

Recommendation and conclusion

This study is conducted on a theoretical basis to ascertain the variety of functions to be taken by a language teacher who wish to effectively implement CL activities in the classroom. The researcher scrutinized many sources of data, ranging from many journal publications to online articles, applied a few comparisons and contrasts, synthesized and selectively incorporated the essential pieces of information that can add core values to this paper. As can be concluded from a large body of existing literature, the successful exploitation of CL strategies requires an EFL teacher to re-conceptualize and modify their identity in a multidimensional way, and simultaneously overcome predetermined challenges that might arise beyond expectation. To optimize the collaboration among language learners and the internal dynamics within each group, it is highly recommended that teachers should invest more of their time and effort into the design of interesting activities as well as the adoption of proper pedagogical strategies in order to motivate students and familiarize them with CL situations. By no means should lower achievers in class be neglected. One individual who is frequently afraid of losing face and rarely communicates with other members can still have certain potentials to contribute to the group's accomplishment. Additionally, it is advisable for teachers to make learners fully aware of undeniable benefits brought by CL, and satisfactorily support them to build up confidence and thus enjoy the cooperation process with other fellow students in a student-centered, teacher-facilitated environment.

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USING ENGLISH SONGS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN LISTENING AND SPEAKING ACTIVITIES IN EFL CLASSES

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Abstract

Using music and songs has so many benefits in learning foreign languages, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes; Therefore, up to now many teachers in every corner of the world have been using English songs in their classes. However, how to use the English songs effectively is still a problem to discuss. For this reason, in this paper the presenter will share her process of choosing and using English songs as an extra material in accordance with the course book *Interactions I - Listening/Speaking - Silver edition* by Judith Tanka & Paul (2007). In addition, the presenter will also share the experience that she had while using English songs in her EFL classes at Dong Thap University, she will also share lyrics and online links of English songs for future references.

Keywords: English songs, extra material, listening & speaking, course book.

Introduction & context

English songs can be used for a wide variety of ESL learning and teaching activities, especially for listening and speaking skills. First, for speaking skill, at low level we can use English songs to help students practice pronunciation by singing out loud, usually it sounds boring to practice pronunciation but it is more interesting to practice singing. For higher levels, we can use English songs to start discussions on a topic or even make them become the centre of debate. This is especially true of songs that develop a particular theme. Second, English songs are also great for teaching listening. We can teach new vocabulary with songs and students would understand them better within the context of the songs, we can ask students to fill in the blanks or choose the correct words to complete the songs while they are listening.

Most English-major students at Dong Thap University are not used to listening and speaking skills because they do not take these skills in their examinations. In their first year at university, they sometimes start to learn these skills from the beginning and it is very hard for them to follow the course book. The common mistakes that our students usually make when speaking English are the final -ed of the regular verbs in the simple past tense, the final sounds -s of plural nouns or verbs for the third person in the simple present tense, the consonant sounds / ð/ and /θ /. In order to investigate the attitude of students on using

English songs in the listening and speaking activities, the researcher tried to find out the answer for the following question:

What are the effects of using English songs to engage students in listening and speaking activities in EFL classes?

Literature review

There are several features of Krashen (1982), relevant to music and language. The research is based on the three most accepted components: the affective filter, the monitor model, and natural input.

Bob Lake (2002) stated in his journal *Music and Language Learning* using music in the class resulted in a more relaxed learning environment, and improved both the emotional states and the affective filters of the students. From his experience, Bob Lake also found that when coupled with a visual image, music can become a very powerful learning tool. Repetition, pronunciation and hand motions combined with a good-natured attitude can be very effective with language learning.

Brian Cullen (1998), in his journal *Music and Song in Discussion*, reported that in his study most students loved listening to music in the language classroom; therefore, music and songs could also be used as teaching tools. Often students held strong views about music and students who were usually quiet could become very talkative when discussing it. He also stated that in many cases, the teacher played a song and led a discussion on the meaning of the lyrics in a song.

Failoni, Judith Weaver (1993) stated that the use of music in the foreign language classroom offers a unique approach to enhance students' awareness of another culture, and also can aid in the practice of communication skills.

Natalia F. Orlova (2003) in her journal *Helping Prospective EFL Teachers Learn How to Use Songs in Teaching Conversation Classes* stated that as a cultural phenomenon, songs can introduce students to the musical and cultural patterns typical for the target language community.

Kevin Schoepp (2001) in his journal *Reasons for Using Songs in the ESL/EFL Classroom* stated that songs have become an integral part of our language experience, and if used in coordination with a language lesson they can be of great value.

Method

1. Design

This research is of a descriptive one in which the researcher collects the information and reflects the facts. Students were asked to answer the questionnaire after having finished all the ten songs in the course. The lecturer combined the questionnaire and the class observation she did during the course to write the reflection on the learning of the students as well as on the planned processes and how well they worked. The questionnaire was composed to find out *the effects of using English songs to engage students in listening and speaking activities in EFL classes.*

2. The process of choosing and using English songs in EFL Listening and Speaking classes

2.1. The process of choosing English songs in EFL Listening and Speaking classes

- Pedagogical considerations

In order to choose suitable songs for the students in our teaching context, first the researcher considered the course book: *Interactions I* - by Judith Tanka & Paul Most – it consists of 10 chapters as Academic Life, Experiencing Nature, Living to Eat, or Eating to Live, In the Community, Home, Cultures of the World, Health, Entertainment and the Media, Social Life, Sports. Then there were some categories to be considered such as which sound(s) could be introduced in the song, which sound connection could be introduced in the song, and which words or phrases of words needed to be explained in the song.

- Cultural considerations

Most Vietnamese students, like students in some other Asian countries, have grown up with the effect of Confucianism, so the way they express their love to other people might be different from that of the westerners. While listening and singing, students can find out the similarities and differences between other cultures and their own one.

- The themes

The two chosen themes are: The relationship with other people (in the family as well as the society) and how to solve personal problems, and special occasions.

2.2. The process of using English songs in EFL Listening and Speaking classes

Ten English songs were chosen to use in the teaching process. Copies of the lyrics with the blanks for the missing words were prepared. Students were required to listen and fill in the blanks with the missing words.

For the pre-listening stage, there should be the introduction of the authors, bands and songs. Words and idioms in the song should be chosen to guide students to read before

listening. Copies of the lyrics should be given to students so that they could read and guess the missing words before listening.

For the while-listening stage, the lecturer just turned the music on, let the students listen to music for the first time; they just listened to the melody, no notes whatsoever. Then, students listened to music for the second time and began to fill in the blanks with the words they heard. Students should listen to the song two or more times to complete filling in the blanks.

For the post-listening stage, the lecturer asked the students to share what they had done with their partners. One student was asked to write the answers on the board, other students looked at the board and compared the answers with their own ones. Then the whole class listened to the song again and checked their answers. Students were encouraged to listen again and sing along. The difficult passages should be practised more in class and at home. Then they could focus on the content of the song for more discussion.

Findings and discussion

From class observation, the researcher could see that the students became more and more confident in speaking English, they really made progress in pronouncing the final sounds – s and –ed as well as the two sounds / ð/ and /θ /.

From the questionnaire, the researcher found that 100% of the students liked listening and singing both inside and outside class. Also, 100% agreed that practising listening and singing English songs could make the class more exciting and help them more confident to speak English. Similarly, 100% of them agreed that they could learn grammar and vocabulary while 83% thought that they could learn idioms from English songs. 100% of them agreed that the songs were easy enough and over 66% had no idea about the change in the teaching method of the lecturer. Nevertheless, 100% of them agreed that English songs can not replace the tasks in the coursebook.

Conclusion

Using English songs in class is a good way to engage first year students in listening and speaking activities in EFL classes in Dong Thap University. Actually, the researcher has three things to share from her experience. First, it was not easy at all to choose the suitable English songs for students, in order to engage them in listening and speaking activities, the lecturer should choose songs with simple music, vocabulary and expressions for students to listen to. Second, the steps to present the songs in class should also be changed when necessary to meet the need of students from different levels. Last but not least, this is just a descriptive research on the students' attitude; there should be further research on lecturers' attitude to suggest more strategies to help students learn listening and speaking skills better in EFL classes in Dong Thap University.

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RUNNING DICTATION TO TEACH SPELLING TO YOUNG ENGLISH LEARNERS

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Abstract

Running dictation is one of the strategies in teaching English Language through games in the classroom. It helps teachers and students focus on the four language skills that need to be addressed in the English language lesson especially for young learners. The main objective is to assist in the development of the four language skills. There are a variety of advantages to be seen on learners' behavioral and cognitive progression. It gets the students to move around rather than sit after a few hour lessons in other subjects. The absence of language games can be a hindrance to language learning as students can get demotivated when the learning stays in a stereotype manner (teacher-centered). Having games in the language classroom interest students where they think they get to play while they are actually learning. This will be explained in the first part of the presentation. The second part will talk about how the running dictation is carried out in the actual classroom situation to promote meaningful communication and opportunities for creative language use with the revision of vocabulary, grammar, word or sentence order teamed with listening and speaking practice.

Introduction

Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are all equally important in language development. They are very much interrelated. A skill that is achieved successfully may enhance that of another. Children who can speak a language fluently also seem to be able to write fluently as stated by Lamott in Harmer 2004, 'Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life; they feed the soul.' However, most Bruneian children in the rural areas do not generally speak English at home except those who have educated parents. Furthermore, reading is not a culture that is prevalent in most families in Brunei. Parents reading aloud to their children are not the norm in many homes especially in the uneducated, unmotivated and low income families' background. Consequently, children are lacking practice in listening, speaking and reading in the target language. They are also deprived of the opportunity to gain meaningful exposure to and experience of the written literature. Therefore, children are at a severe disadvantage as reading is one of the primary gateways to development in vocabulary and grammar which are among the essential ingredients of writing (Krashen in Larking, 1993). In schools, children are greatly challenged by the expectation that they produce correctly grammatical and properly punctuated sentences which is a daunting task for children with insufficient exposure to books and inadequate knowledge of English.

Through the use of running dictation, pupils are given the opportunity to enhance their speaking skills in the production of the memorized number of words. They will also gain more confidence in using the target language as they go along the exercise of going to and fro in the Running Dictation Game, remembering that they must work as a team to achieve success. It also helps educators to achieve one of the aims in Brunei Darussalam's English language syllabus for primary schools (Curriculum Development Department 1997: p.2) parallel to SPN 21 which is to enable the children to thrive in the world beyond school. Running Dictation also makes it possible for pupils to reorganize their own experience, have compassion for others' work and to entertain and amuse their peers with their listening, reading, speaking and writing product.

SPN 21 syllabus has no particular textbook to use as a guide for teachers and pupils. Therefore it is up to the teachers to search and prepare their own teaching materials. This may be done by googling or reading up various academic and teaching-related materials. Teachers need to be flexible and rely heavily on supplementary teaching materials to get students excited to learn in the target language. At the end of each topic and lesson, students are required to perform and produce in the four language skills. If they are not exposed to various learning environment, their minds and skills may not be as fully developed and activated as they should be. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be aware of the students' learning needs. Some of the problems that may arise are when the pupils' abilities to respond to stimulus in the four language skills are hindered by the quality of the activity, their relevance to the pupils' prior knowledge and actual experience, and the clarity of the instruction or passage used in the dictation.

A rubric is usually used to evaluate students' production in the four language skills. Hence, knowing how to listen, speak, read and write independently is crucial for them. A language learner must acquire sufficient knowledge on these four skills to be able to succeed in their final assessments or examinations. Their success in the four language skills will be the stepping stone towards higher learning success.

Definitions of terms

SPN 21: Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad 21 (21st Century National Education System).

PSR: Penilaian Sekolah Rendah. It is a public examination for Year 6 pupils. Translated into English, it is the final assessment for Primary Schools.

CDD: Curriculum Development Department.

Rubric: a scale used to score a student's work.

Running Dictation

Dictation has been used as a language learning tool for many years. When we think of doing dictation, you might picture the old days where you read the text out loud and the students will sit still, listening carefully in order not to miss the words and relevant punctuations that go with them. Running dictation, however, is a far more engaging activity which is more student-centered and quite different from the traditional teacher-centered approach that had been used in the past. It is a good teaching idea to add running dictation to your teaching repertoire which will add more variation to your teaching activities and approaches. As is the name itself, the running dictation requires the students to get up and moving around. This will provide an opportunity for students to have fun learning, work as a team and aim for success.

Why use running dictation in class

- A literacy classroom which caters to students' needs and various learning styles rather than just to transfer information is more appealing and motivating.
- This activity has been used multiple times and has proven to be successful and more importantly, it brings fun into the ESL classroom.
- The integration of the four macro-skills help the teacher to focus on identified problematic items while the students think they are just having fun and trying to win as a team.
- There is little preparation to be done for this activity. The dictations will take a short time and easier to prepare once you get used to it.
- Resources are easy to get by and not expensive. You just need to provide a pen, a piece of paper and some sticky tape or blu-tack for each small group of 'runners'.
- The teacher will make it an engaging, meaningful, and relevant activity for students with different learning styles and needs.
- Different skills will be focused on within the activity as the teacher comes up with numerous variations of language text.
- The text difficulty level can be adjusted easily to cater for a mixed ability class.
- A teacher can prepare easier and harder text versions for mixed ability classes. This can help to give a chance to the lower ability students to score more or less in the same level as the average and high ability students.

Preparation prior to the activity

Before the activity, you need to teach them punctuation vocabulary to enable them to use the correct punctuation in English. It's a good way to practice pronunciation, check spelling and a wonderful opportunity to train their memorization skill.

Relevance

It is of utmost importance to choose a text which links to the topic or theme that is being covered in class or students' prior knowledge and daily lives. It is also good to identify spelling and pronunciation items that students need practice in and put them in the text with some reminders on what to look out for as they do the activity.

Safety

I have only been using this activity for six years, I have never had to face any safety problems but they can possibly occur when students get too excited during the running part.

Before the activity can begin, these are some things to consider:

- a. The classroom setup. If it is not a good place, it is better to find a spacious area.
- b. The general environment. It is important to make sure that the area is free of obstacles, trip hazards and tables and desks are moved to the side of the class to give way for the running activity.
- c. Ensure that all the students understand the activity clearly and always aware of their own and their friends' safety.

How Running Dictation Works

- Choose a short passage or dialogue and make several copies.
- Put the copies up around the walls of the classroom (you can even do it on the school building if you need a bigger area).
- Then put the students in pairs or small groups. One of the students will walk or run to read the passage on the wall. The rule is to remember some of the passage and walk or run (running is usually the case) back to their partner. Their partner will listen to them, writing the text down carefully as they quietly dictate what they remembered. After the writer finishes writing, they will then swap roles. They will build the whole passage over several turns. As the students usually remember four or five words at a time, they will have to run back and forth before they can actually complete the whole passage.

The team that finishes first is the winning team – however the teacher needs to check for mistakes. Therefore, the students must keep walking to check for mistakes until they are completely sure that they have it down perfectly! The dictation activity will be considered complete once every team has finished their task.

There are various ways to do correction and one of the best and time saving ways is to have the students check the text together where they will also try to identify any errors. This in turn will give them a sense of belonging and achievement. After giving the students a certain length of time, the whole text is read to them at a normal speed to enable them to do checking and correcting. The correction phase will end by giving them the text to check

against. This is the part where students will realize what areas they need to focus on and what they might do better in the future.

Dictation Text Design

The design of a dictation text will focus on introduction or reinforcement of specific grammatical structures in a contextualized passage. As the students do the activity, they will encounter the embedded grammar without even realizing that they are actually learning while they are having fun.

- Samples are given in Appendix A to show how certain grammatical items are embedded in a text linked to the theme or topic covered in class.
- Appendix B is the sheet of paper the students will write on as they do the Running Dictation Activity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Running Dictation is an extremely versatile activity. All the four essential language skills are found within this simple but fun activity. It practices first and foremost listening, reading, speaking and writing skills and within the latter a range of sub-skills from letter formation to spelling, punctuation and lay-out. In short, it gives practice in almost everything that needs to be present in ESL classrooms. Students need to be challenged and their love for learning can be nurtured through a variety of interesting activities. It is always good practice to try and vary our teaching methodologies as students nowadays are usually more advanced and need to be exposed to exciting learning environment. The gadgets they are using are more hi-tech but it never hurts to go back to the old paper and pen as long as it is engaging and fun!

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A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR EFL TEACHERS: BENEFITS, CREATION AND MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Following the global trend, in the field of education, the tasks of effectively promoting knowledge sharing, reflection process and further learning among the teaching staff have become more critically important to any educational institutions than ever before. These tasks are aimed at a significant enhancement in the teaching and learning quality at those institutions to meet the increasing educational demands in today's fast-changing world. Attracting talented or experienced people to the organizations, investing in their formal higher learning or short-term training courses of necessary skills and knowledge, increasing incentives, and creating competitive working environments seem to be inadequate for radical changes and sometimes even less effective than planned in terms of financial investment. Therefore, informal learning among the teaching staff in general, and teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in particular, should be strategically promoted alongside with formal training for them. This research paper will study the most common informal form of learning in educational institutions: a community of practice (CoP). This research focuses on the direct interactions among teachers and adopts mainly the theory of community of practice. This theoretical framework includes a historical review of main books on the field, the definition, characteristics, values and formulation principles of CoPs. Besides, the theory of facilitative leadership is applied in this research to find out effective ways to maintain and develop a community of practice for teachers with a view to building high-qualified teaching staff and achieving the organisational planned outcomes.

Keywords: community of practice facilitative leadership knowledge sharing reflection

Introduction

Under the impact of globalization, the global economy is being restructured towards the knowledge economy – the latest stage of development of the world economy (Wikipedia) – where knowledge sharing and innovation play a leading important role in the survival or flourishing of an organization. Following the global trend, in the field of education, the tasks of effectively promoting knowledge sharing, reflection process and further learning among the teaching staff in general, and EFL teachers in particular, have become more critically important to any educational institutions than ever before. Attracting talented or experienced people to the organizations, investing in their formal higher learning or short-term training courses of necessary skills and knowledge, increasing incentives, and creating competitive working environments seem to be inadequate for radical changes and

sometimes even less effective than planned in terms of financial investment. Therefore, informal learning among the EFL teaching staff should be strategically promoted alongside with formal training for them. Among the most common informal forms of learning in educational institutions is learning through a community of practice (CoP). This paper is aimed to point out the benefits of investing in creating a CoP for EFL teachers, and the ways of creating, cultivating and managing the CoP.

Communities of Practice: definition, characteristics, values and formulation principles

The term community of practice was coined by theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger when they delve into the notion of situated learning in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Smith, 2004, p. 134).

Definition and Characteristics of CoPs

Communities of Practice are defined as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis”. “CoPs are not a new idea” and can be found everywhere (Wenger et al, 2002, p. 4). There are various forms of CoPs depending on the situation that formulates them and their members. Some common forms are small- or big-sized, long-lived or short-lived, collocated or distributed, homogeneous or heterogeneous, spontaneous or intentional, and unrecognised to institutionalized. These CoPs share the following fundamental characteristics: a knowledge domain, a community of people interested in this domain and the practice they share to flourish in this domain. (p. 24-29).

Values of CoPs to Members and Organisations

CoPs are not only an tool to analyse theories but also an instrument being strategically deployed by organisations to cope with challenges posed by the process of globalisation as they are “a key to success in a global knowledge economy”. CoPs are a special organisational structure that not only benefits its members’ professional development but also closely connects their benefits to the development strategies as well as the goal achievement of the organisation (Wenger et al, 2002, p. 17).

Seven Principles for Cultivating CoPs

Wenger et al. suggested seven principles for organisations to consider when setting up CoPs(p.51-63). 4

- Designing for the CoPs’ natural and strong growth

- Opening a dialogue between the insiders' and outsiders' perspectives to acquire a deep understanding of what are related to the CoP and to realize its potential for knowledge development.
- Encouraging participation at different levels of interest. Developing both public and private community spaces.
- Developing a systematic body of knowledge that can be easily accessed should be vital important value to create in the community development process.
- Combining familiarity and excitement.
- Creating a right rhythm for the community at each stage of its development and at different gatherings (like regular meetings and informal lunches).
- Generating “enough excitement, relevance, and value to attract and engage members”.

Managing and Developing CoPs

Wenger et al. (2002, p. 139-150) pointed out several drawbacks of applying CoPs in organisations. They are hiding knowledge, restricting innovative ideas, “[holding] others hostage to their expertise”, risks of disorders in the CoPs constituent elements (domain, community or practice). To reduce the above negative sides arisen during the process of formulating and implementing CoPs, this paper suggests the facilitative leadership as an effective instrument to manage and develop these communities. “Facilitative leadership is a skilled approach to leading that [is] based on the core beliefs and practices of group facilitation. It makes extensive use of process tools in order to provide structure and casts the leader in the role of helper and enabler” (Ben, 2006, p. 8). The ultimate role of the facilitative leader is “to evoke the best possible performance from each group member” and “to instill confidence, authority, and responsibility in each person” (p. 8-9). The application of facilitative leadership is based on the following principles: empowerment, collaboration, creativity, transparency, systems thinking, feedback, and development (p. 40-42).

A CoP for EFL Teachers

Characteristics of Successful Teachers and CoPs for Teachers Before applying the theory of CoPs to create a proper CoP for teachers, it is important to consider the characteristics of the teaching staff in an educational organisation. According to A. S. Barr, successful characteristics of teachers include “resourcefulness, intelligence, emotional stability, buoyancy (or enthusiasm), and considerateness (or friendliness)” (cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 454). Besides, although CoPs for teachers share the same domain, community and practice like other CoPs, the creation of such CoPs should take into consideration teachers' seniority in career, level of knowledge and professionalism, position in the organisation and each member's background.

Benefits of CoPs for Educational Organisations and for their EFL Teachers

The values of investing in establishing CoPs for teachers in educational organisations should be made understood not only to the CoPs' members but also to the management levels involved because both the organisations and the teachers benefit from such CoPs. In the short term, the organisations can improve their teaching quality, facilitate the training transfer, meet to a certain extent the social demands as educational providers, keep updated of what is going on among the teaching staff and identify potential problems and have timely solutions to them; whereas, their members can enhance their work experience, help each other to flourish together, understand each other to get on well in future pair- or group-work and their ability to apply what they have been trained through exchanging experience, seeking solutions from more experienced teachers, reflecting together on teaching practice, and getting inspiration from others.

In the long term, teachers can develop their teaching professionalism and hence, build up more and more professional knowledge and experience resources for the organisations, ensure the teaching quality and the organisational sustainable development. Furthermore, such CoPs will create such intangible values as good relationships and trust, teachers' loyalty to the organisations and strong attachment to their teaching career, the spirit of solidarity, the professional confidence, open-mindedness and identity. Most importantly, the CoPs also create an environment that facilitate the organisation's strategy implementation, educational philosophy and objectives, and promote innovative ideas or strategies among teachers for sustainable and strong development of the whole institution through their active participation and collaboration.

Cultivating CoPs for EFL Teachers

Based on the principles of forming a CoP by Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002, p.51-63), the following model of CoP for EFL teachers is suggested for managers' consideration.

- This kind of CoP should be designed in a flexible way on voluntary basis with facilitated activities. The manager who takes charge of forming and cultivating such a CoP among teachers should know well about each teacher's background and the organisational culture to know how to start a CoP. The starting point can be the time teachers gather for breakfast, lunch or break time and then regular informal meetings. This is also a way to create a right rhythm for the community at each stage of its development and at different gatherings. The CoPs should also be placed in the relation with other CoPs (e.g. administrative staff) and with other formal public or private meetings in the educational organisations. Through observation, the manager can find out the teachers whose characteristics tend to help them active and positive if joining in a CoP. He or she can also figure out some existing small communities among the

teaching staff based on which a larger CoP for teachers can be designed with flexible number of participants, motivating and useful activities, and voluntary attendance.

- Values of CoPs should be discussed and clarified and reach agreement among teachers and managers concerned, which ensures better teachers' participation and constructive attitudes. The values may vary for each stage of development, so there should be an explicit interpretation of the values among the participants. All members are encouraged to participate in all CoPs' activities regardless of levels of professional knowledge, seniority, position and levels of interest (core group members, active

Members and peripheral members

- A systematic body of knowledge that can be easily accessed should be vital important value to create in the community development process. There should be a person assigned to this task of recording and synthesising for the organisational knowledge management.
- The design of CoPs' activities should be a combination of familiarity and excitement (for examples, routine activities and exciting events) to facilitate members' participation and to create motivation and interest in participation at the same time.

Managing and Developing the CoPs

“Managing” a community of practice may [...] be regarded almost as a contradiction in terms: even an intentionally designed CoP is a living, self-evolving entity that may not thrive if participation in its processes is artificially forced” (Jameson, 2011, p. 452). However, CoPs must be managed within an educational organisation to ensure teachers' active participation and the communities' effectiveness and development. In order not to affect much the voluntary characteristic of CoPs, facilitative leadership should be applied in managing such communities, based on the following principles: empowerment, collaboration, creativity, transparency, systems thinking, feedback, and development (Ben, 2006, p. 40-42).

Based on each member's background, the leader should find a way to involve all members in the CoP's activities which can be conducted in pairs or in small groups and decide appropriate time and benefit for all participants. Making all members understand the benefits of having a CoP to themselves and the development of the organisation and making them feel attached to the community is a way to encourage active participation, collaboration and shared responsibility for the sake of the community and the organisation. Designing questions as well as activities should center around common interest, teaching problems, creative initiatives, reflective thinking and learning motivation. Moreover, the leader should create a safe atmosphere where members feel confident and secure to express their opinions as well as their difficulties. He also makes sure all actions of the CoP take place in relation to and toward the objectives of the CoP and the whole organisation.

Connecting people should be always done on the basis of their professional strengths or works and on the needs of their professional development. Feedback on the effectiveness of every aspect of the CoP operation and personal performance toward the development of the educational education should be continuously and tactfully done. Any activities that promote learning, knowledge sharing, reflective thinking on teaching practice and positively developing the CoP should be always valued.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CoPs for teachers are indispensable to the strong development of an educational organisation. In order to have an effective CoP for EFL teachers, the special features of the CoP that should be applied are “supportive and shared leadership; collective creativity; shared values and vision; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice (Hord, 1997) as well as participation, socialization, discussion, reflection, and collaboration for self-development (Moisseeva, 2005)” (cited in Yildirim, 2008, p. 237).

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TRACE EFFECTS – A NEW GATE TO AMERICAN CULTURE

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Abstract

With the significantly growing application of technology, the virtual world is seamlessly integrated into young people's daily lives and playing 3D games has become one of their top four favorite entertainment activities. Following this trend, there has been increasing interest recently in developing a 3D digital game-based language learning (3D-DGBLL) environment which maximizes the degree of learners' engagement in the target language and culture. Among such 3D games, Trace Effects can be seen as an outstanding example. This innovative game not only improves 'out-of-box' thinking in English language learning and teaching to equip learners with a deep understanding of the target language, but it also has the potential of being motivating and effective learning tool in English language education with its interactive, engaging and immersive cultural activities. Geared toward players aged 12-16, Trace Effects exposes users to American society and explores cultural locations by taking a dynamic journey through the United States in a virtual world filled with diverse English-speaking characters. This study conducted with Access Micro-scholarship students in Son La, Lao Cai, Bac Ninh and Quang Ninh aims to explore the influence of this 3D-DGBLL on deepening English language learners' understanding of American culture.

Keywords: Trace Effects, 3D digital game-based language learning (3D-DGBLL), virtual world, American culture

Overview of trace effects

Being considered as a powerful mechanism, technology has penetrated all aspects of our everyday lives, creating digital generations who all have great access to networked digital technologies, particularly to the relaxed virtual worlds. It is predicted that by the year 2020, virtual reality will come to allow more productivity from most people in technologically-savvy communities than learning and working in the 'real world' (Anderson & Rainie, 2006). In the USA, the need to prepare students with the ability and skills to be able to participate fully in the increasingly technological society has been a long-standing priority (US Department of Education 2000) and one of the most promising emerging trends in 21st century education. Such urgent need along with global trends in English language demand and a huge temptation of the virtual worlds have been great sources of inspiration to educational software designers to develop digital game-based language learning environments which focus on producing in-game language from socio-cultural

perspectives of English language acquisition to maximize learners' engagement in the target language and culture. Among such 3D games, Trace Effects (henceforth, T.E), officially introduced by the U.S Department of State in 2012 can be seen as an outstanding example with its interactive, engaging and immersive cultural activities which bring learners an exciting, collaborative English language learning gaming experience.

Geared toward players aged 12-16 and all those young at heart, T.E exposes users to American society and explores cultural locations by taking a dynamic journey through six states of the US and enjoying different cultural festivals or environments in a vibrant virtual world filled with a diverse cast of English-speaking characters. Within seven chapters of game play, learners take the role of Trace, a university student in the year 2045, who touches a time machine in an U.S. high-technology lab and accidentally sends himself backwards in time to the present. In order to find his way home, Trace must use American English and his wits to undertake challenging missions to change the present for the better by helping six different young people across the country at pivotal moments accomplish great things and have a positive impact on the present. In the game, players walk around conversing with other characters to gather information, literally pick up vocabulary to collect words and items scattered across the environment, put new vocabulary into practice by combining verbs and items from the inventory tab to carry out actions to progress through quests. Completing each chapter helps players unlock the next chapter and it is impossible for any players to access the next chapter and advance their levels automatically with unfinished missions left. During this time, players travel to cultural locations to explore themes related to entrepreneurship, community activism, empowering women, science and innovation, environmental conservation, and conflict resolution in particular places such as a university campus, a farmers' market, a museum, and a high school. Along with the 7 chapters of game play, T.E consists of 28 practice activities to review grammar and vocabulary, 4 multi-player language sub-games, 7 graphic novels for extension activities, a point-based scoring system, American English dictionary integration and comprehensive teacher-and-student manuals. These tools give players great opportunities to sharpen their English language skills by continuously inputting and then producing the language at different proficiency levels, as well as to enhance their culture knowledge to communicate and collaborate more appropriately and effectively. The outstanding feature of T.E, reflected in the inextricable link and powerful integration between culture and language within this game, helps players improve their motivation in culture acquisition by experiencing various physical, mental, and emotional levels.

Trace Effects has reached Vietnam and been warmly welcomed by both English language learners and educators. Aiming at introducing this innovative game to high school teachers and students in different provinces in Vietnam and making English learning experiences more meaningful and interesting, the mini-project naming 'Blended Learning with Trace

Effects' sponsored by the US Embassy in Hanoi was successfully launched from September 2014 to June 2015. The participants of this project consisted of nine members from different universities in Vietnam who planned, developed and conducted it; local teachers of English who supported the course in face-to-face teaching and other offline and online activities; and the students of the English Access Micro-scholarship Program from four provinces in Vietnam, including Lao Cai, Bac Ninh, Son La, and Quang Ninh who were the target audience of this project. This course was implemented in 8 weeks for both onsite training and online learning. Specifically, the two-day training provided the steps to install and play the game in the computer, and the guidance in how to complete the given activities on Edmodo. A private Facebook group was also used as the forum for exchanging, sharing, discussing, and providing supports among all students and teachers. From week 2 on, students were required to do tasks and assignments on Edmodo with the support from 2 online teachers. At the same time of playing and learning 7 chapters from the game, students in groups planned and developed their final mini-project which would be video products of Trace's cultural trip to Vietnam. The four groups whose videos were the best ones, voted by the teachers and audience would have chance to join the offline cultural exchange camp in Hanoi at the final stage of the project, one from each province.



Four winning groups in the offline cultural exchanging camp in Bat Trang Village, Hanoi, June 2015

Additionally, the pre-survey, pre-test, post-survey and post-test were designed and given to students to check their understanding, reactions and opinions of this course. With the students' good performance in the final mini-project, constructive results from the surveys and tests, and positive reflections shared on the Facebook group; along with the systematic analysis of students' assignments on Edmodo; the project was, at last, successfully done and employed the six learnings: learning by exploring; learning by collaborating; learning by being; learning by building; learning by championing; and learning by expressing (Lim, 2009). The recommendations for further study and a wider-spread project were given with more relevant changes and strategies.

This paper only focuses on analyzing and explaining what cultural features in the U.S. students could learn and how they could learn them through this innovative language game. The result was taken from the result of the project.

Cultural factors needed to be explored

It is a fact that language and culture are intimately intertwined and are not able to be separated in effective language learning. Language plays fascinating and dual roles as the carrier for most transmission of the knowledge, ideas, and values that make up a given culture as well as a shaper of culture, while culture takes the decisive role in the success of any interaction. Language without culture is unthinkable, so is human culture without language; therefore, the acquisition of a language is also the acquisition of its corresponding culture. In acknowledgment of the fundamental part of culture in the language learning process, in modern education, culture is viewed as the goal of language teaching. The significant feature that makes T.E games outstanding is the full exploitation of American culture in different aspects, which promotes players' cultural and intercultural understanding and prepares learners to communicate successfully in the languages and cultures being studied. The simulated roles and identities, emotional connection, and high-risk practice in a wide range of supportive authentic communications that T.E virtual environments afford can be leveraged to enhance players' culture knowledge and then to produce culturally appropriate and meaningful social interactions.

This paper primarily focuses on the five predominant aspects of American culture explored in implementing T.E encompassing: American behavior culture, American university campus life and services, diversity of American people and groups and democracy, American celebrations and cultural destinations, and American community activities.

1. American behavior culture

Behavioral culture, the most important cultural aspect for language learners, helps define an individual in a specific society, and navigate him/her in daily life. Failure to be aware of the behavior expected in the target culture or failure to behave in a culturally appropriate manner results in misunderstanding, embarrassment, and personal frustration and hinders successful communication in the target culture and language. In this sense, learning how to communicate in a foreign language is actually learning how to behave in the culture. In T.E, players have great opportunities to be exposed to American natives, and are provided with some options of language use to develop and maintain the conversations with members of the target culture to complete the missions or to impolitely discontinue the talks and leave the missions unfinished.

With a wide range of situations (namely requesting, instructing, recommending, convincing, negotiating, thanking, refusing, interrupting, warning, agreeing-and-disagreeing, and satisfying-and-dissatisfying) in ascending order of proficiency from elementary to advanced, T.E demands players to produce culturally appropriate use of language. In chapter 1, for example, for the way to the Student Services Office to get a student ID, players may ask senior students or a librarian for directions, thus they are

expected to express their politeness and gratitude by using formal language (e.g. ‘Excuse me! Could you tell me the way to the SSO, please?’, ‘Thank you very much’; instead of ‘Hi. Show me the way to the SSO, please.’ and ‘Thanks. Bye.’). Yet, in informal talks with other peers, players may greet, request, and/or express disinterest in friendly language without paying close attention to strict rules of respect and appreciation to make interactions run smoothly and naturally. Providing players with the knowledge of pragmatics by engaging them in different conversations of different social purposes, T.E only partly advances their English language and prepares them to communicate efficiently in the languages and cultures being studied, thus, it is the teachers’ role to transfer the pragmatics of this game to real-world settings in order to help students to best master the language.

2. American university campus life and services

According to Lewis, Founding Member of the Super Group, “to make language learning effective for the new generation of international students, an enjoyable and robust environment is needed—one where they can interact with virtual characters and learn from *real life* situations.” He also supposes that because of this “interactive experience”, learners can have chances to acquire English in a communicative and important way as well as discover American culture and society “through an educational process that feels natural, not artificial.”

Obviously, in this game, the main virtual characters are university students who take part in a lot of activities inside and outside their campus. After completing chapter 1, a number of students from Access classes revealed that they were interested in the campus life of Trace and his friends during their first days at university since they could be university students in near future. Most of the students learned how to get a student card which is obligatory to enter the library. Through conversations with the representatives of each student organizations like the Green Club, Women in Business or the Science Club, they knew and understood about the function and usefulness of such groups in helping students study and live actively outside their classrooms. Furthermore, in almost chapters, many students additionally learned that how to get help from others and they also admired some friends from this game when those characters never gave up their ambitions and dreams as well as made efforts to get fruitful results, which they felt satisfied with.

3. Diversity of American people and groups and Democracy

“America is a home to all” can be seen as a very outstanding idea when people talk about the US. The learners-players absorbed this ‘unique and exceptional’ feature of the U.S. when learning and playing this game. They saw African Americans, Asian Americans and European Americans in a variety of contexts as they participated in a normal life in the U.S.

In chapter 2, a number of the students felt excited about the campaigning activities when the candidate, to call the support from others, needed to claim what she/ he would do when she/ he was chosen to be the school leader. This knowledge seemed to have an influence on the students' attitude when some of them wanted to become a monitor or leader of a group more independently and naturally, especially school girls.

4. American celebrations and cultural destinations

Kansas, New Orleans, Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, San Francisco were some places Trace visits in the U.S. For many students, this was the first time they knew another name for New York - the biggest center of economy and trade in America, the Big Apple and they could see the Golden Gate and some other famous places in San Francisco. Besides, they enjoyed shopping in a farmers' market, walking in busy streets and relaxing in a coffee bar. By this way, those students felt more familiar with American life.

Additionally, in the adventure with Trace, students also joined a birthday party and Thanksgiving holiday with a family, from which they knew how they should prepare for and behave at a party and on a holiday with American friends. For instance, they needed a birthday cake, colored candles and decorative flowers for a birthday party and a turkey on the table for a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal, so that they can be aware of the meaning of these celebrations more clearly.

5. American community activities

It is clear that the young American citizens have plentiful and varied community activities after school that they feel proud of. In this game, some of these are introduced to the players-learners.

Fundraising

In chapter 3, the students from the course reported that they appreciated the efforts Trace made to help his friends save music at an Elementary School. Convincing and helping to solve the problems the members of the band met in their lives so that they could come back to play music for children freely must be a very meaningful and emotional process. At once, the students had an idea that music is not only for entertainment or business, but also for fundraising, a so popular and beloved community activity in the U.S. country. Besides, they also had some time to enjoy Jazz in a very American style.

The voluntary activities in T.E have inspired learners-players to do similar things in their schools or hometowns (i.e. collecting old clothes for the poor and collecting money to organize Children's Day activities for children of orphanages, and to provide school supplies for children of the hinterlands).



Children' Day in orphan village in Son La



School supply offering for children of a remote village in Lao Cai

Environmental conversation

In Chapter 4, the students were taken to a seriously polluted river and a street with numerous water bottles, plastic bags and newspapers. A campaign to help locals to understand the bad effects on the environment and know how to reduce the pollution by reusing and recycling materials effectively and properly. To some students, this kind of activity sometimes happened in their schools or their living areas as environmental pollution has become an urgent problem in Vietnam in general and in their cities in particular.

It can be seen in the game that, to succeed in doing these activities, those characters needed to get help from different people from every walk of life like a female owner of coffee bar or a mail-boy. In the other words, this message encouraged people to take responsibility for solving common problems and bettering our life together.

Conclusion

All in all, T.E is a motivating and effective learning tool in English language education with its interactive, engaging and immersive cultural activities. The simulated roles and identities, emotional connection, and high-risk practice in a wide range of supportive authentic communications that T.E virtual environments afford should be fully exploited and leveraged to enhance players' culture knowledge and then produce culturally appropriate and meaningful social interactions.

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GETTING TO KNOW THE ENGLISH SELF-STUDY ACTIVITIES OF TRANSFER STUDENTS AT THAI BINH MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

With language learning in colleges, "self-learning" has become an important skill that the transfer students need. Research objective: Survey on English self-study activities of transfer students in the first year, at Thai Binh Medical University, academic year 2012-2013. Subjects and Methods: descriptive study, including 250 transfer students in the first year. Research results: it can be seen that transfer students are aware of the importance of the self-learning (54.8% of the students said it's very important, 42.8 % important), motive of learning is quite clear (77.2% of the students wishes to use English for work) and their initial concept of self-learning is fairly accurate, but the majority of the students have not learned actively, and have not learned effectively (82 % of the students assessed themselves at the average level of ability to learn English in class, 76.4 % can understand the lesson in class in a limited way, 90.1% have not participated in some part-time English classes). Transfer students have encountered many difficulties in the English self- study, such as difficulty in remembering vocabulary, sentence structures (58%), no methods of learning (56.8%) and not knowing how to pronounce correctly (50.4%). Conclusion and recommendations: The survey results showed that students need help to be aware of the principles of self- learning, the strategies to learn English effectively, and more time should be invested in consulting activities.

Keywords: autonomy, self-learning, transfer student

Introduction

With language learning in college, "self-learning" has become an important skill that students need to have. Good implementation skills help them capture the knowledge of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary, so learning becomes more effective. Guiding students to perform well in order to learn a foreign language is required for teachers in the innovation process of teaching and learning methods in universities today. To achieve the goal of teaching and learning, it is necessary to change efforts and coordination from three sides: students, teachers and schools.

In Thai Binh Medical University, there are 02 first-year transfer general practitioner classes and 02 first-year transfer pharmacist classes beginning to learn English at a basic level (Elementary level). In particular, Modules 1 and 2 have the form of an oral examination, Modules 3 and 4 in the form of written examination. The transfer students

here differ in that with the long-term students, the subjects are at different ages, are working in health care facilities, and are sent for training. Additionally, many are married people who often have less time to study, while some of the students have not learned or used English for many years so they meet significant difficulties, especially in pronunciation, memorizing vocabulary and grammar structure.

These are the reasons to conduct scientific research studies on this topic. The objective of this research is: Learn English self-study activities of students and inter first year, Thai Binh Medical University academic year 2012 - 2013.

Overview

The study is for students of interconnected, self-study activities associated with the guidance of teachers. This activity takes place in two areas: self-study classroom and outside of class, in the following manner:

*** *Self classroom***

- Listen to the lecturers and guides.
- Take notes as understood by themselves.
- Talk to teachers and friends about unclear issues.

*** *Self-study outside class.***

- Reading textbooks, reference materials (Lecturer regularly leads to reference book when starting a new course).
- + Scan to get general ideas.
- + Read carefully to grasp the details.
- + Read and understand the information on each topic.
- + Record the reading problems.
- Establish study groups to conduct group discussions.
- + Schedule a discussion group for a number of sessions during the week.
- + Leader gives assignments for team members to the collection document, which was conducted in full.
- + When the team members have problems collecting materials, they raise questions to regroup and exchange is brought into the discussions.
- Completion of assignments and find additional exercises to do to shape and forge the necessary knowledge to learn to mature.
- For each subject should make proposals to review their knowledge systems and additional self-learning knowledge to make deep knowledge and portray depth.

– To make the schemes, the scientific research projects, and thesis.

Thus, for learning activities of transfer students with high quality and efficiency, transfer students must have the knowledge and skills of self-learning. Self learning skills are the physical conditions for transfer student to make self-learning motive into certain results and to make transfer students confident in themselves, foster and develop interest and maintain a positive perception of their self-learning activities.

Subjects and methods

1. Geographical, research subjects

Research sites: Thai Binh Medical University.

Research subjects

Transfer students first year studying English at Pacific Medical University.

2. Research period: From April to June 2013

3. Research Methods

Study Design: Using the methodology described.

Sampling, sample size

* Sampling method:

Selecting students: Proceeding to choose all the inter first year students studying English at the TBUMP to investigate.

* Sample size: Select the whole first year transfer students studying English (for academic year 2012-2013)

According to the statistics table below, the sample size was 250 students.

Class	Number of students
Y1A-K46	66
Y1B-K46	66
1A-K7	60
1B-K7	58

4. Methods of collecting information

The team includes 02 members who are the research participants topic. Each researcher will fill patterns and instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire to students in the 04 classes selected of general doctor K46A, K46C and pharmacy K7A and K7B. Upon completion, students will be submitted to the researchers then moved on to the project manager for the synthesis process.

5. Index survey

The objective and subjective factors affect transfer students in earning English in the first year at the TBMU.

The causes of the situation and proposed solutions.

6. Methods of data processing

Complete questionnaires were processed, coded, input into a computer using Epidata program (version 3.1). Then the data is exported to the Stata program (version 10) to analyze and synthesize.

The study results were presented in tables and charts showing the percentage and comparison.

Results and discussions

1. Awareness of the English self-study of transfer first year students at Thai Binh Medical University

Survey results showed that 55.6% of the students had the concept that "self-learning" is still guided by lecturers rather than those with 42.4% of concept that it is not guided by lecturers.

The transfer students highly evaluated the role of self-study at universities with 54.8% of them claiming that it is very important, 42.8% assuring that it is important and only 2.4% claiming that self-study is not important.

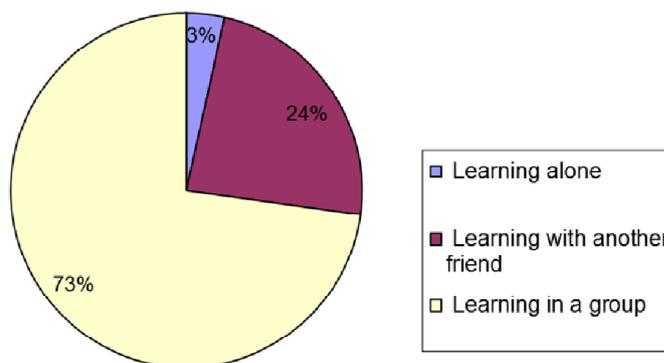
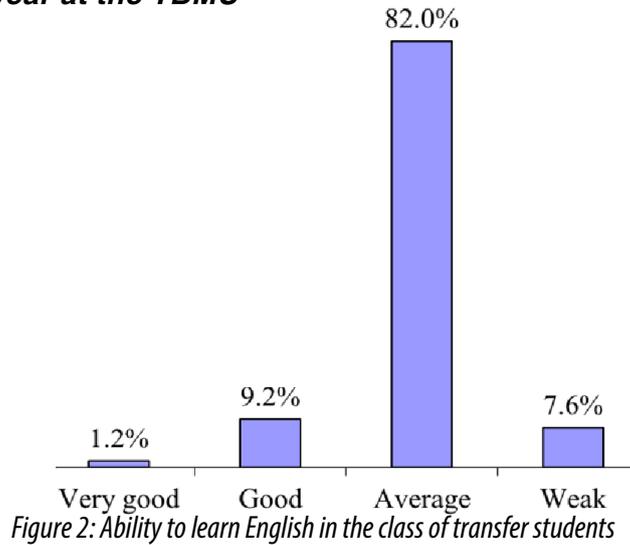


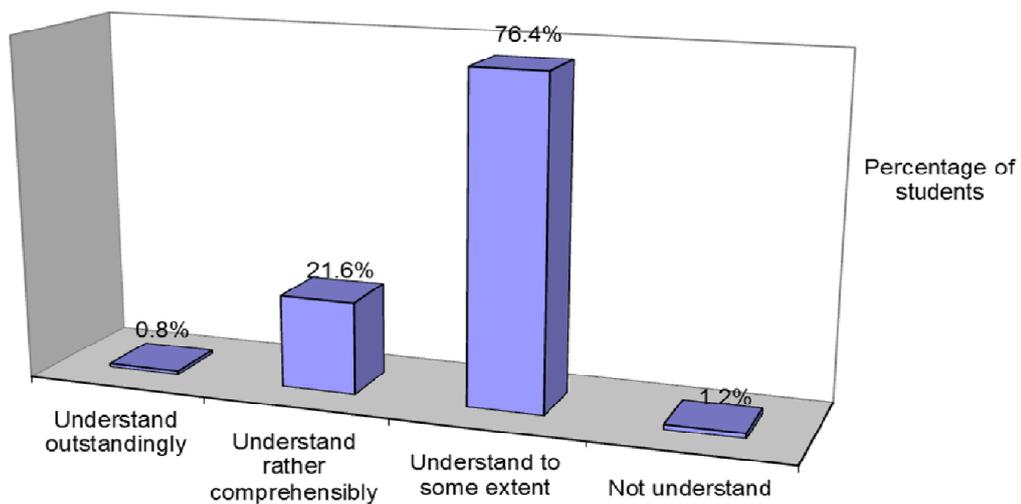
Figure 1: Transfer student with the concept of "self-learning English effectively"

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the majority of students (73%) inform that self-concept study is successful language learning in groups. 24% of students effectively learn concepts when they learn with one another. Only 3% have the conception that studying alone is effective learning.

2. The situation of English learning and self-learning activities of students of English inter-first year at the TBMU



The figure above shows the majority of transfer students (82%) assessed themselves at the average level of capability in the class to learn English. Some students self-assess fairly and well respectively 9.2% and 1.2%. 7.6% of students self-assess their ability to learn at weak levels.



Parameters in Figure 3 show that the majority of students, 76.4%, understand English in a limited capacity in the classroom at all levels. Some students understand quite fully at just 21.6%, and some students grasp and understand all of the classroom language at 0.8%. 1.2% did not understand the material in class.

Transfer students allow time for self-study of English every day. About 37% work for 20-30 minutes a day and the same percentage of students are learning 30-60 minutes a day. Finally, 26% of students study from 1-2 hours a day.

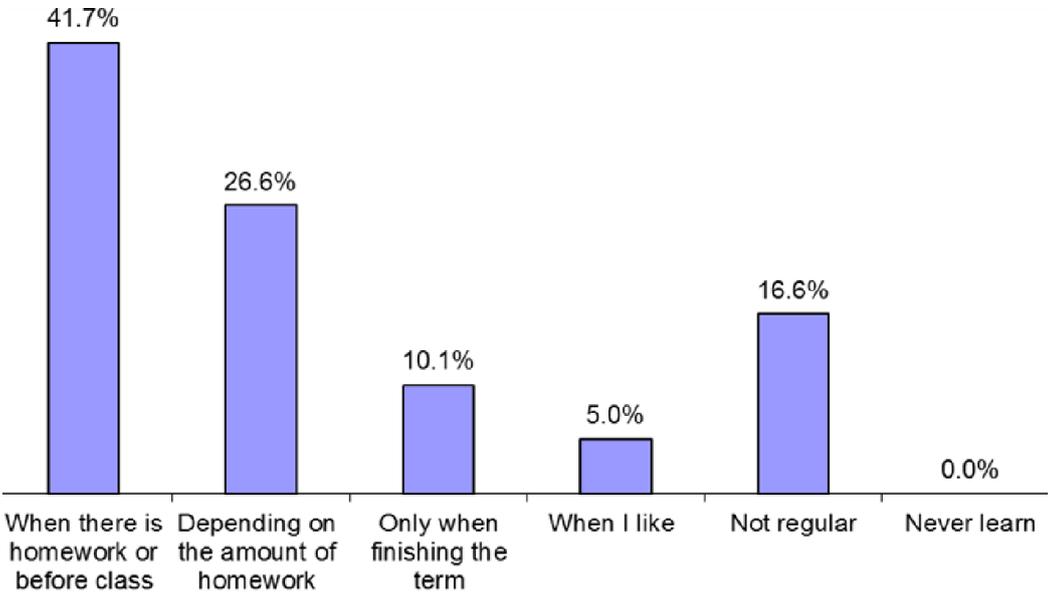


Figure 4: The time that transfer students allow for self-learning English

The survey results indicate that in the figure transfer students spend time on study when doing course exercises or before class sessions (41.7%), or self-study exercises depending on the amount (26.6%). Some students study only when approaching every module exam (10%) or irregularly (16.6%). A few students (5%), self-taught as a leisure activity.

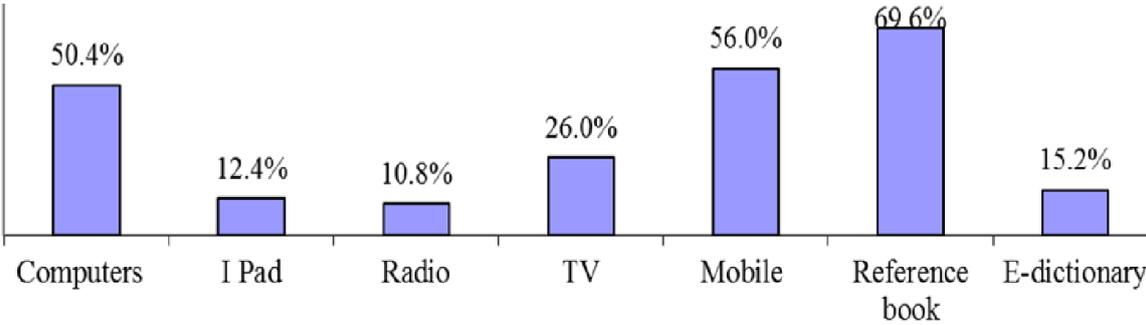


Figure 5: The means by which inter-first year students conduct self-study

Research results from the figure above show the majority of transfer students using reference books, dictionaries (69.6%), mobile phone (56%), or a computer with an Internet connection (50, 4%) in order to learn English. Some students use the television (26%), MP3 (22%) and the computer when not connected to the Internet (17.6%). A small number of students (about 12%) use Kim Dictionary, Ipad or radio. In addition, there are students

(2.8%) who also use some other means of self-study such as the first cassette, CD and VCD, foreign newspapers and magazines, drug instructions or labels and import labels.

3. Student aspirations in supporting self-learning

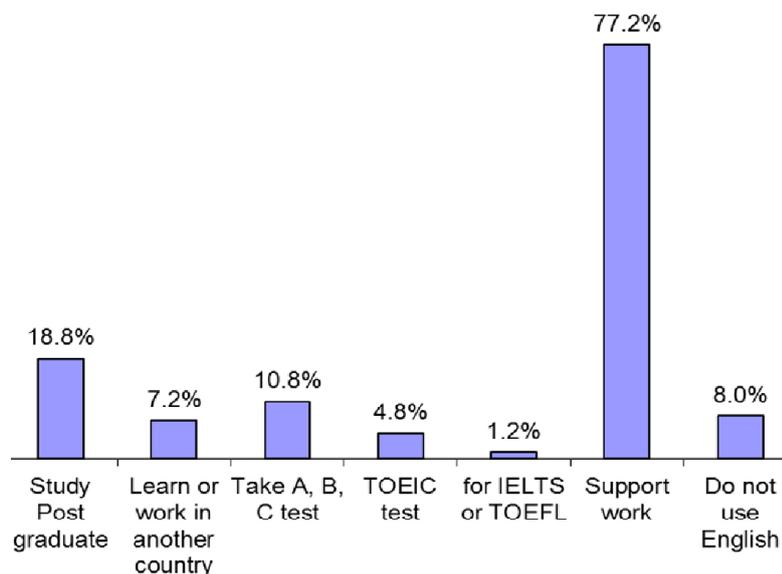


Figure 6. Aspiration in English after graduation of transfer students

Data collected via survey in the figure above shows that 77.2% of the transfer students wish to use English for work after graduating from Thai Binh Medical University. Some of the students (18.8%) want to use English to graduate. Others (10.8%) wanted to have the knowledge for exam certificates A, B, C. 7.2% of the students are required to study English or working in foreign countries, while 8% of students do not speak English.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that although transfer students were aware of the importance of the study (54.8% to be very important, critical evaluation 42.8%), with the motives for learning quite clear (77.2% of the transfer students wishing to use English for work) and with the original concept of self-teaching quite accurate, the majority are not turning into active motor learning positive collective, and have no effective way of self-study (82% assessed themselves at the average level of ability to learn English in class, 76.4%, comprehension of English in the classroom at a limited level, 90.1% do not attend part-time English classes).

Transfer students encounter a lot of difficulty in order to learn English, such as difficulty in remembering vocabulary, sentence structure (58%), no method of learning (56.8%) and not knowing how to pronounce accurately (50.4%). These difficulties have a certain influence on their academic performance.

Recommendation

Specifically, the following should be done:

- a. To the students, the first year transfer students should be providing more information on the benefits and methods of the study through verbal exchange of learning experiences with experts and lecturers, key students, and alumni on success in learning. Once they recognize the benefits and methods of study, students will move on to interactive learning to grasp a deeper knowledge, and improvement for the students was a major factor in that process.
- b. To the teachers, to help students to learn, first in attitudes, teachers need to change to get used to his new role as a mentor who advises students, as well as motivating and encouraging learners help set academic goals, select appropriate learning activities, analysis and evaluation.
- c. On the side of the school, there should be more investment in improving evaluation systems, equipment to learn a foreign language, English textbooks for students to use outside the classroom curriculum and transfer students can hone their other language learning skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENTS' NEEDS OF ESP LEARNING AT VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN THE CENTRAL PART OF VIETNAM

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to focus on investigating the mechanical engineering students' needs of ESP learning at a vocational college in the Central of Vietnam. The results show that these mechanical engineering students are aware of the importance of the four skills in which listening and speaking are rather important in their study and their future jobs. Such paper also enables teachers to choose appropriate materials and teaching methods for an ESP course that not only equips students, future employees with integrated skills, basic vocational skills but also motivate them to learn ESP, and help them communicate in English effectively in their future jobs.

Keywords: mechanical engineering students, ESP, workplace, communication.

Introduction

In the reality of the socialization and globalization, ESP becomes more critical for the technical students, especially the mechanical engineering ones. They go on to be in high demand in society now. The mechanical engineering students (MESs) need to have a foreign language in order to help them adapt and exist in the current socio-economic development and be successful in the workplace. In that context, the students at vocational colleges have to improve their skills in ESP, they need to prepare themselves for the labor market by studying ESP better. In general, most of the students have a low standard of English and different levels of proficiency of English. Most of the teachers lack experience in teaching ESP, they hardly take part in any training courses of ESP. In addition, most ESP teachers could only access materials for preparing their lessons from different resources in which there were not sufficient language skills, language areas needed for students at work places. This limits students' ability of language use in real life. Furthermore, in terms of textbooks in use for some courses at some vocational colleges such as English for IT and English for Engineering in which Mechanical Engineering, Dynamics, Electronics, Thermal Engineering and Domestic and Industrial Electrical are taking the same 'generalized' syllabus. Thus, the current ESP syllabus cannot fully cater to the students' specific language needs. Learning ESP without combining it with when and how it is used in all contexts can not help students much in developing their English skills. Due to the above factors, it is significant to delve deeper into investigating mechanical engineering students' needs of ESP learning so that the right measures can be taken to improve what is taught and what is needed for their future jobs at vocational colleges.

Literature review

The term ESP generally stands for “English for Specific Purposes” which emphasizes the students’ purposes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.19) define ESP as, “...*an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning*”. Duan and Gu (2004, p.1) also have the same definition, “*ESP is a pedagogy in which the syllabus, contents and methods are determined according to the needs of learners’ specialized subjects*”. Paltridge and Starfield (2013, p. 2) stated, “*ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain*”.

From the definitions, we can see that ESP supports the students in their use of English effectively to communicate at workplace, to read English technical materials and so on. Therefore, ESP plays an essential role for technical students. The aim of ESP teaching is to develop the students’ English language competencies to enable them to communicate effectively in their future professional environment and understand technical materials.

Teachers can encourage their students to set their targets and plan their future in learning. NA enables the teachers to understand their students' wants, lacks, and needs to be able to prepare for the ESP syllabus. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the approach to ESP should be based on the learner's needs in their respective specialized subjects. Holliday (1995, p.9) argues that teachers play a vital role in managing what happens in the classroom. Thereby designing an ESP program requires a careful needs analysis not only of the students themselves but also of the school where the program is being planned as well as any aspect dealing with language. Clearly, the role of needs analysis in any ESP course is indisputable. NA is considered to be the main driving factor in ESP curriculum development.

This study, to some extent, follows the technique and procedures as Hutchinson and Waters describes in his book. ESP teaching should be based on the principles of effective learning and teaching language for general purposes.

Methodology

The researcher seeks to answer the question “What are the Mechanical Engineering students’ needs of ESP learning at a vocational college?”

This study combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches because they provide reliable and valid results. The data collection including the instruments such as questionnaires and interviews will be presented. The participants chosen to answer the questionnaires included 65 Mechanical Engineering students (MESs) at a vocational college in the central of Vietnam and 20 Former Mechanical Engineering students (FMESs) working around Hue city. All five basic English lecturers, and five experienced

instructors of Mechanical Engineering teaching at that college were interviewed to find out the students' current English proficiency, teaching and learning styles, students' weaknesses and strengths. In the interviews, the language lecturers and subject instructors were asked the questions which were listed in advance but sometimes, some extra questions were also asked depending on each interview. After being classified, the data was analyzed, put into percentage and presented in tables and charts.

Results and discussion

1. Findings on Students

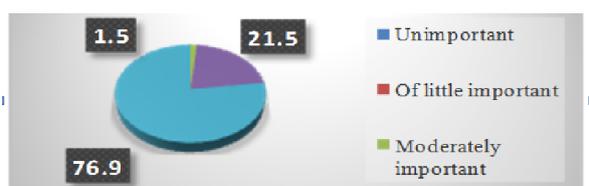


Figure 4.1(a): MESs' perceptions on the importance of ESP for their current study

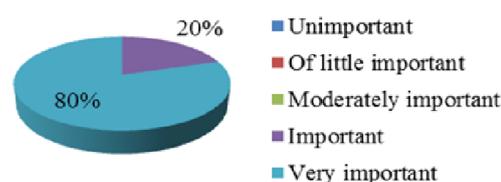


Figure 4.1(b): FMESs' perceptions on the importance of ESP for their jobs

Regarding the result of the data in Figure 4.1 (a), the respondents had held a positive perception of ESP which it is a sign that they were fully aware of the importance of ESP for their jobs because 76.9% of the respondents emphasized that it was very important to learn ESP. As for FMESs, we can see the findings from Figure 4.1 (b), all of them (100%) realized that ESP was very important or important for their jobs.

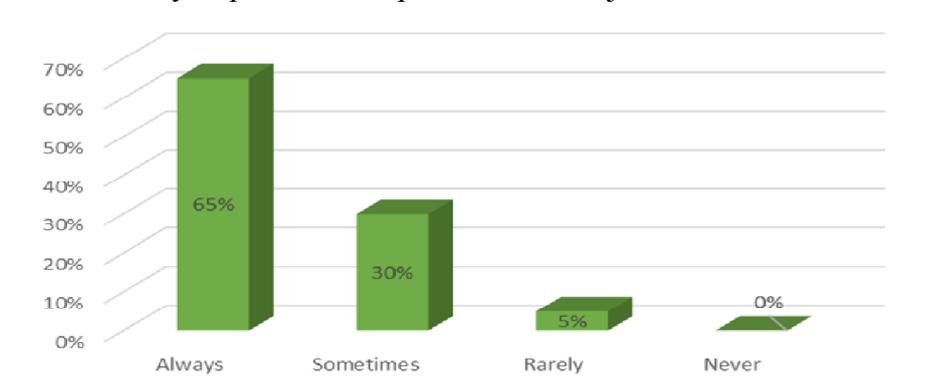


Figure 4.2: The frequency of using ESP of FMESs at workplace

As indicated from Figure 4.2, a considerable percentage of FMESs (65%) confirmed highly the necessity of ESP at workplace. They claimed that they used ESP frequently. From the analysis, the findings indicate that MES' needs including target needs and learning needs in ESP learning is clear. English language, especially ESP is important for their current study and their future jobs. 76.9% of respondents emphasized that they need to learn ESP for their job requirements, they consider ESP to be very valuable for technical knowledge and their future jobs as well.

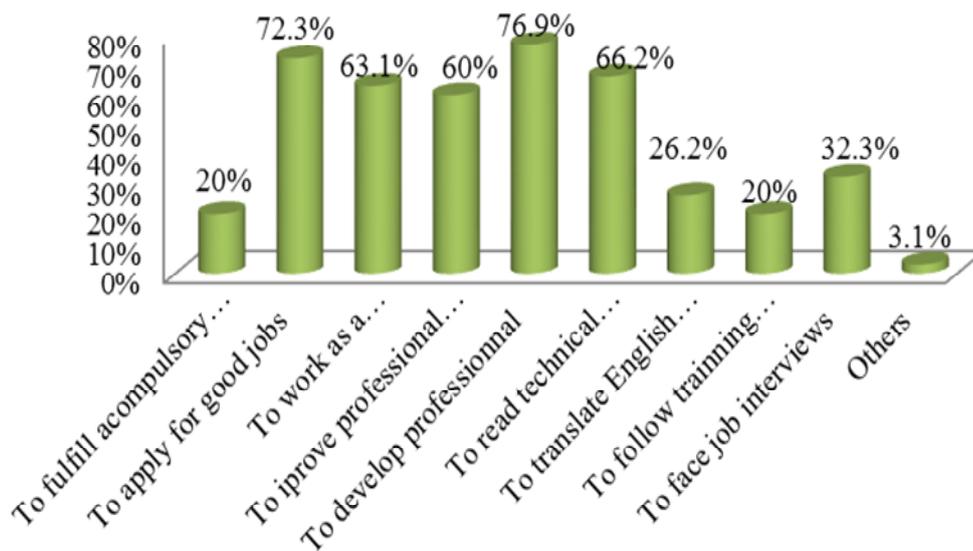


Figure 4.3 (a): The purposes of learning ESP of MESs

The reasons for learning ESP of MESs can be seen from Figure 4.3 (a). 76.9% of the participants responded that they needed ESP to communicate at the workplace, 72.3% thought that ESP could help them to apply for good jobs, 66.2% learnt ESP to read technical documents, manuals and catalogues.

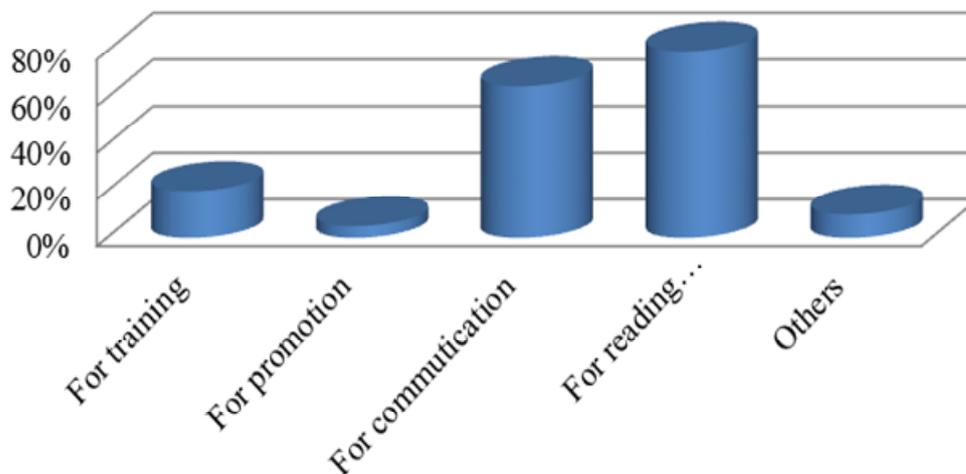


Figure 4.3(b): The purposes of learning ESP by FMESs

Based on Figure 4.3 (b), the purposes of using ESP of FMESs have a slight difference from MESs'. A noticeable number of the students, accounting for 80% revealed that they needed ESP to read technical catalogues, manuals, materials. 65% of them claimed ESP helped them to communicate at workplace.

Table 4.1: Students' perceptions on the importance of English language skills and abilities

Language abilities needed	MESS' perceptions on the importance of English language skills and abilities to their future jobs					FMESs' perceptions on the importance of English language skills and abilities to their current jobs				
	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very important	Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very important
Listening	10.8%	7.7%	18.5%	52.3%	10.7%	0%	9.2%	12.3%	64.6%	13.8%
Speaking	1.5%	4.6%	6.2%	15.4%	72.3%	1.5%	4.6%	6.2%	15.4%	72.3%
Reading	0%	0%	15.4%	67.7%	16.9%	3.1%	1.5%	10.8%	67.7%	16.9%
Writing	1.5%	1.5%	20%	61.5%	15.4%	1.5%	16.9%	46.2%	23.1%	12.3%
Grammar	67.7%	16.9%	15.4%	0%	0%	36.9%	38.5%	16.9%	4.6%	3.1%
Translation	36.9%	29.2%	10.8%	7.7%	0%	12.3%	23.1%	53.8%	9.2%	1.5%
Technical Vocabulary	1.5	4.6%	3.1%	10.8%	80%	1.5%	1.5%	18.5%	18.5%	60%

Turning to FMESs' perception on the importance of English language skills and abilities to their current jobs, we can see that technical vocabulary, speaking and listening obtained the high ranking by FMESs (80%). Reading ranked the highest with the average of 90% from the moderate importance to the very importance.

Considering the data about MESSs' perceptions on the importance of English language skills and abilities to their ESP learning, it can be seen that the students prefer to develop reading and speaking skills to writing and listening skills and they claimed that these two skills are necessary for their current study and their future jobs (Table 4.1).

In general, although there is a little difference in the percentage, the purposes of ESP learning by the two groups of students are the same. Reading technical materials come up to be the most important purpose. Coming next is communicating at work place and applying for jobs. It is clear that ESP is for reading technical materials and for communicating actively at work place. Using ESP for communication is their exact choice which means that they really need it for their jobs.

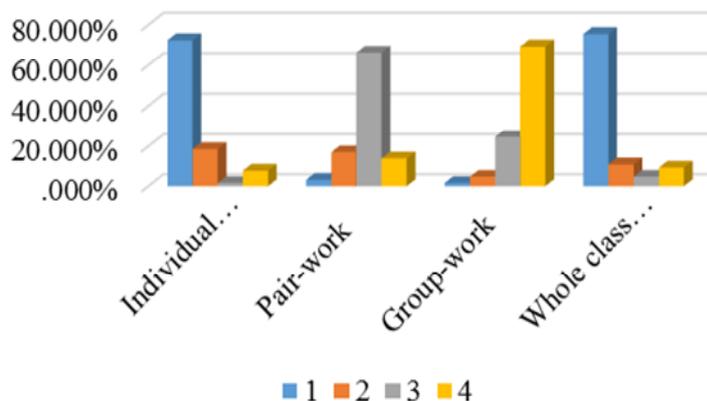


Figure 4.4: MESSs' preference for learning styles

It is clear that the students liked to learn or be taught in pair-work (80%) but preferred group-work activity (93.8%) combined between “effective” and “the most effective”. The percentage of refusal is 3.1% of pair-work activity and 1.5% of group-work activity. Thus it is understood that students prefer to have more time to practice pair-work and group-work activities in an ESP course.

2. Interview results

In the lecturers’ interview, one hundred percent of the lecturers stated that knowing students’ learning needs before planning an ESP course was really necessary and important for them. Most of the interviewed lecturers thought that students are mostly aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Some lecturers admitted that they were weak in speaking and listening. Additionally, the information through the interview indicated that most of the lecturers complained about the low and mixed levels of students’ competences. Moreover, the lecturers stated that large classes and testing and assessment process were the other serious problems. On the other hand, they also complained that a variety of the materials are outdated. Some ESP courses use the same textbook. There were no teaching aids such as cassettes, projectors and so on for the teaching of foreign language; whereas, the students are mostly interested in lessons that use ICT. This unfavorable condition of learning equipment had a considerable influence on the teachers’ teaching as well as the students’ language acquisition (Teacher Interview 5 (TEI), December 29th, 2014). All of the five English lecturers agreed that English, especially ESP plays a very important role in their future jobs. (TEI2, January 4th, 2015).

In the interview with five subject instructors, they stated that foreign books and journals were good and useful for their Mechanical Engineering programs. Therefore, they often surf the Internet to search for specific materials for their teaching (TEI5, December 19th, 2014). Another interviewed subject instructor inserted that he always had difficulties in reading online materials (TEI1, December 19th, 2014). Moreover, five subject instructors had the same opinion, they agreed that they are timid and hesitant to communicate with foreign specialists. Due to those matters, they all stated that Mechanical Engineering students need learning technical terms in ESP courses to support their current study as well as their future jobs. ESP lecturers should have more interesting activities to raise students’ communicative competence. (TEI3, December 19th, 2014)

Conclusion

This study investigates the MESS' needs of ESP learning at a vocational school. As a teacher of English, the researcher conducted this study with the hope that this thesis can help the second - year students of MESS and ESP lecturers become more aware of the benefits of teaching and learning ESP that not only equips students, future employees with

integrated skills, basic vocational skills but also motivates them to learn English, and helps them communicate in English effectively in their future jobs.

The findings showed that a Needs Analysis is important to find out a better idea about the techniques and strategies that help to give the lecturers a clear view of students' needs, wants, and lacks. The purposes of the students' needs of ESP learning have been perceived in various facets of language skills, language abilities, types of learning and teaching and will be used as the fundamental framework for designing an ESP syllabus. Hopefully, with this survey result, the ESP course at vocational colleges in the future will meet the students' needs. The quality of training scientific and technical cadres will be upgraded as well.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF PAIRWORK AND GROUPWORK ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORS AT QUANG BINH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Pair work and group work activities have long been considered as effective collaborative language teaching strategies to enhance the quality of English teaching and learning. However, subjective and objective reasons cause the ineffectiveness in the outcome of applying these collaborative activities into the teaching and learning English for non-major students at Quang Binh University (QBU). This paper aims at identifying the QBU teachers and students' perception and attitude toward the benefit of using pair work and group work activities in English classes, some strategies to exploit the effectiveness of pair work and group work as well. Together with uncovering the difficulties and/or the disadvantages of using this technique in the English language classes, some possible solutions and recommendations are also proposed so as to help both the teachers and non- majored students of English at QBU better at enhancing the quality of every English class.

Introduction

The volume of knowledge taught at the university level is larger than that of general education, and the teaching method also differs accordingly. The requirement of autonomy in learning forces students to work hard in class. In foreign language teaching trends towards communication as most of the universities applying at present, the Learner-centered method poses high demands on teachers not in terms of building instructional objectives but the choice of optimal teaching methods in order to attract the learners into lessons and the activities given by the teachers. Among the popular activities that are generally applied, working in pairs and groups (Pair/Group Work) is considered one of the most positive activities that help students develop the ability to work collaboratively so as to understand the lesson thoroughly and enhance the initiative and creativity of students in thinking and in practice. This does not only have positive implications in the learning process, but is considered to be the strength of students in their future work as well.

As a compulsory module and occupying a lot of credits in training programs for higher education, English is one of the subjects causing many difficulties for non-English majors in Vietnam in general and Quang Binh University in particular. There are a lot of subjective and objective reasons leading to this situation, among which subjective reasons coming from the students should be mainly included, that is the lack of creativeness in pair and group work. In addition, management methods of teachers in pair and group activities

in the language class fail to conform with actual conditions; learning environment and conditions are not really qualified enough for such activities to be effectively implemented. The article “Effectiveness of pair work and group work activities in teaching and learning English for non-major students at Quang Binh University” aims at giving an overview of the superiority of pair and group activities in every English class, analyzing the realities of the English class at the Quang Binh University as well as introducing some operational model pairs and groups to help increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning set for this module.

Main content

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. Pair work and Group Work in CLT

Since the 70s of the twentieth century, Pair work and Group work started catching the eyes of not only the researchers but also the educationists. The incompatibility of Teacher-Talking-Time Technique (T-T-T) in language classes set the urgent need to change. The thorough study in combination with the real teaching experience set the foundation for the new collaborative teaching approach, i.e. Communicative language teaching method (CLT) which was considered an important change in language teaching and learning. T-T-T technique in traditional classroom with the prominent role of the teachers and no active role of students during teaching - learning process was changed into the Student - Talking - Time one (S-T-T). Contrary to the former technique, the latter with a wide variety of activities such as group work, pair work, role-play, etc. seemed to be more practical when it made students more autonomous and collaborative in class. A classroom with the teacher in the central position was replaced with the place where the teacher and the students joined together to share thoughts and ideas interactively and naturally. With this technique, students could be provided with a valuable learning experience and opportunities to present their own ideas to their partner, their groups and their teachers with the aim of understanding the lessons thoroughly and receiving critical comments and feedback from other students and teacher relatively.

Ellis (1994) pointed out that students will be more motivated to participate in every communication task when they are given more opportunities to do this. In some Asian countries, including Vietnam, students tend to be very anxious about making mistakes, especially in front of others. Thus, pair work and group work activities make a positive contribution for helping them be more stimulated and facilitated in generating a more relaxed and cooperative classroom atmosphere.

1.2. Definitions to Pair Work and Group Work

According to Dr. Dang Dinh Boi (2010), the group is a gathering of people together with a common goal, often interacting with each other. Each member in the group has a clear role and mission with the general rules governed. In other words, the group is a group of people organized and operating under certain rules, in order to achieve common goals and interests.

In education, pair / group activity is a learning method in which members work together closely in order to solve a particular problem of study towards a common goal; Studying in pairs/ groups not only meets the requirements of innovative learning methods, but is also very significant for the study of each person. That's why Barbara G. D. (2009) stated in his research that whatever the content is, working in small groups tends to help students understand and learn more than what is taught and remember much longer than any other forms of teaching.

According to Scrivener (2005), "Pair work is a type of classroom interaction when students are working with another student. This may be to discuss something, to check answers, to do a communicative activity, etc". Johnson and Johnson (1994) defined group work as "a small group that has two or more individuals who; interact with each other, are interdependent, define themselves and are defined by others as belonging to the group, share norms concerning matters of common, interest and participate in a system of interlocking roles, influence each other, find the group rewarding, and pursue common goal". It can be seen from these definitions that working in pair or in group is of great importance in CLT strategy since it can help students communicate enthusiastically with each other, learn how to communicate and share ideas effectively, give confidence to students to become skilled through discussions and encourages the members of the pair or group to focus on the point.

2. Research Objectives

2.1. Research Aim

This study aims to investigate the perception and attitude of non – English majors at Quang Binh university towards pair work and group work in English class, the reality of applying this collaborative strategy in teaching English for students by the teachers of English.

2.2. Research Questions

1. Do non – English majors at Quang Binh university like to work in pairs and groups to learn English?
2. What is the reality of exploiting pair work and group work activities in teaching English at Quang Binh university?
3. What should be done to improve the effectiveness of pair work and group work activities in English class?

3. Methodology

In order to conduct this study, some of the following methods were simultaneously used:

- Questionnaire
- Interview
- Class Observation

Beside that, the researcher's personal experience in teaching English for non – English majors at Quang Binh university is of great importance in providing valuable viewpoint to make the data collected more reliable.

4. Population and Sampling

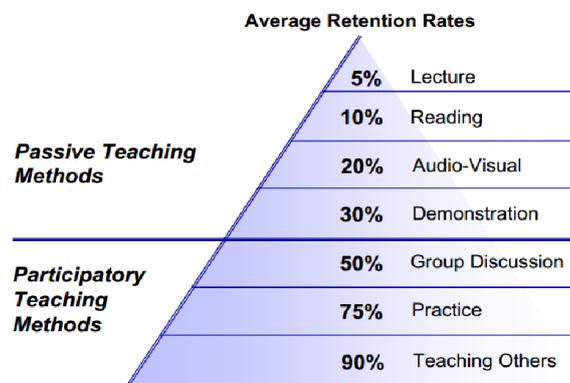
The participants of this study were 100 university non – English majors chosen randomly from different classes of general English. Their level varied from pre-intermediate to intermediate. They study English as a foreign language in Quang Binh University. Thus, the type of sampling is purposive and effective, the data collected is reliable as students have already experienced in pair work and group work. In addition, 10 out of 100 chosen students and 3 experienced lecturers of English were also invited to participate in closed interview. Their ideas are of great importance to support what was presented in the questionnaire.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Students' perception and attitudes concerning pair work and group work in English classes

Different from the traditional teaching methods, CLT strategy is learner-oriented. Therefore, the tasks or activities designed by teachers always pay attention to the students' capacity in understanding, remembering and presenting. The data shown in the Learning Pyramid proves the fact that once students are given more chance to participate in different activities in class, they will be more active, self-confident, and their rate of retention will definitely be higher.

LEARNING PYRAMID



*Adapted from National Training Laboratories. Bethel, Maine

In terms of pair work and group work, a majority of the students think that they are very important in English classes. The result is illustrated through two different sources of data, the major source is from the questionnaires and the additional one comes from the interview. The following figure shows students' perception of these two activities.

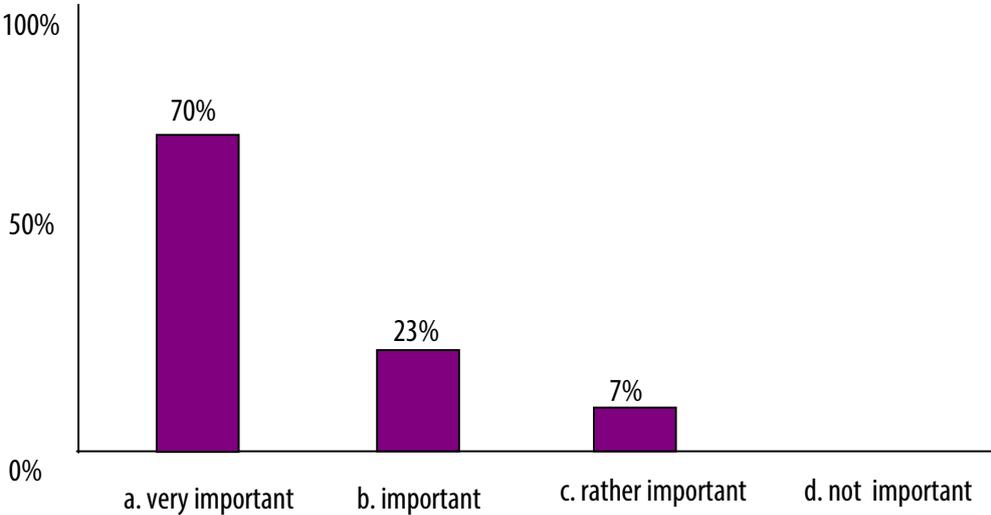


Figure 1: Students' perceptions of the importance of pair work and group work in English class

Figure 1 shows that most of non-majors of English at Quang Binh University are aware of the importance of pair work and group work in their English classes. This is proved by the selection of 93 out of 100 questionnaire-given respondents, occupying 93%. This high percentage indicated that pair work and group work are very important and can not be ignored in the process of teaching and learning English. Among 93% of the students agreed that pair work and group work are of importance in class, 70% of them thought that it is very important and the rest 23% also considered this important, but not so important that they had to take most of the time to concentrate on. The remaining (7.0%) could not help admitting the fact that pair work and group work are important; however, their perceptions towards such activities is not as high as the former group. No respondents interviewed and questionnaire-given denied the importance of pair work and group work, as can be seen in the above figure. This is, consequently, proof for the necessity of pair work and group work in English classes and sets the requirement for the teachers of English to design and organize these collaborative activities effectively in the process of teaching and learning.

In parallel with the students' perception, their attitude towards pair work and group work activities varied.

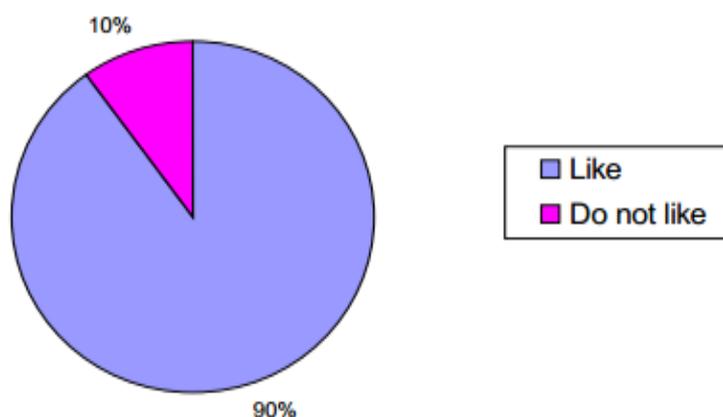


Figure 2: Students' attitude towards the importance of pair work and group work in English class

The data in Figure 2 shows that the students' attitude towards pair work and group work activities is both positive and negative. 90% of the respondent like working in pair and in group, meanwhile 10 % of others do not show their interest in these activities at all. Most of the interviewed students (8 out of 10) showed their likeness in joining pair and group work with the positive points as follows: Pair work and group work are mutual interactive activities which helps to broaden the mind, keep better communication, make them more motivated and improve the language proficiency. The rest two of the interviewed students did not share the same ideas when saying that pair work and group work makes students become more dependent and lazy, and they tend to use their mother tongue rather than English, some of them even do not pay any attention to the tasks or topics being discussed. As a result, pair work and group work affects the consensus building between the students, and the benefit gained from these activities is not as much as it was expected.

It can be concluded from the data and analysis above that pair and group work play an important role in English teaching and learning, since they can contribute to the success and effectiveness of every English class. Doff (1989) claims that "pair work and group work encourage students to share ideas and knowledge". It is, obviously, one of the goals that CLT methods aim to achieve.

5.2. The reality of exploiting pair work and group work activities in teaching English at Quang Binh university.

The reality:

Studying in pairs and groups is always helpful for the students to discuss, share ideas and debate with each other based on information that all members of the pair or group learn; it also helps increase integration, as well as more spirit of learning; create opportunities for every member to present and enhance their soft skills.

The results collected from the interviews with three experienced lecturers who are currently teaching English for non-majors at Quang Binh University revealed that the implementation of pair work and group work has been gaining a lot of positive effect; however, negative effect is unavoidable.

In terms of positive effect, they said that most students are aware of the role and significance of pair and group learning, so they are very excited to perform themselves actively in class. Studying in pairs and groups provide good opportunities for the members to express themselves; therefore, they become more confident, more accountable. Beside that, this process helps students learn the knowledge and practise the ability to work collectively more frequently. They also added that compared with other methods of learning in English classes at present, learning in pair/ group is bringing a lot of benefits, i.e., strengthening the bond among members of the class, helping each member acquire and master more knowledge from the lessons, creating many intellectual products. More importantly, lecturer's quality is also recognized and highly appreciated.

Regarding the negative effect, the lecturers interviewed did not hesitate to share their ideas that the effectiveness of pair/ group activities are not as high as expected, the majority of activities are mostly focusing on creating products to fulfill the teachers' requirement with less emphasis on the collaborative process to create pairs'/ groups' products. All three interviewed lecturers agreed that most students are lacking, even weak on teamwork skills, especially skills of conflict resolution, responsibility sharing, self-examining and evaluating, etc. In addition, the students' awareness of participation and contribution is not high, some students are rather lazy and dependent, they often keep silent and wait for the results rather than share their ideas with their partner or other members. That the group leaders lack executive and operational management skills and the self - test - team evaluation is not objective enough is also considered as the negative effect of pair and group work.

The reasons:

There are both objective and subjective reasons for ineffectiveness of pair work and group work which should be listed out.

Regarding objective reasons, it can be tentatively concluded that the English class size is the first one. The ideal number of students in every English class is from 20 to 30; however, in reality, this number is averagely 45 - 50 students/ class. The overcrowded classes together with insufficient facilities cause the lecturers of English considerable difficulties in designing pair work and group work activities. Due to this reason, according to the lecturers interviewed, working in pair and in group is really time-consuming. It takes time for all pairs or groups to practise. However, if students are asked to work collaboratively in pair and in group without any chances to practice, they will soon be bored and not excited with these kinds of activities.

Secondly, nearly a half of non - majored students at Quang Binh Univerisy do not have good English competence. Therefore, they often feel unconfident, even shy in working with others, which impacts negatively in the effectiveness of teamwork. Furthermore, the time for English class is too tight, causing difficulties for teachers to design the activities and students feel tired of overload work.

In terms of subjective reasons, students' learning objectives and students' awareness of their participation in English classes are regarded as the two main ones.

For most of the non-majors, English is a secondary or extra subject. They pay less attention to it than their majors since their purpose is to get good mark to pass this subject rather than accumulate knowledge of a foreign language for their future jobs. They participate in pair and in group as a member obligatorily, therefore, their contribution is not as positive as they should. Some students even do their private work during the time of pair and group discussion. In addition, the lack of group leaders' ability in controlling and managing also leads to the passive participation of group members. Normally, in this situation, it is the group leader who has to do all things, from thinking the ideas to arranging them in logical order and presenting the results in front of the lecturers and other groups.

5.3. Some solutions to help improve the effectiveness of pair work and group work activities in English class for non-majored at Quang Binh University

Creating excitement for learning environment helps increase the students' self-awareness in learning procedure. In order to reduce students' anxiety and provide them with the chances to improve their language capacity, ground on the findings, some of the major solutions are suggested to help better the current situation of teaching and learning English for non-majors at Quang Binh University as follows,

Lecturer's active role as an instructor:

In order to gain benefits and effectiveness from pair/ group work, the lecturer should play an active role as an instructor. In every English class, some students are extroverts but some others are introvert; therefore, a specific task with clear instruction from the lecturer is of very importance for all of the students to understand what they have to do. The more they understand the tasks assigned clearly, the more excited they become in doing their work. Beside that, the clear instruction from the lecturer can help save time for practice.

Lecturer as a monitor:

Walking round the class and observing the pairs or groups work, the lecturer can not only make notes of the most common mistakes to discuss them later, but also discover whether they are able to communicate with each other in the foreign language or not. Furthermore, it is the lecturers who can find out the difficulties each of the pairs/ groups are facing so that they can give them some useful advice or suggestions.

Appropriate compliment and evaluation:

Pair work and group work may be a good way of checking students' progress in learning. Therefore, lecturers need to be check and assess the performance of each pair or group clearly and accurately, openly and fairly so as to promote the eagerness in learning of every students. Normally in group task, students work collaboratively, when one member can not give a complete answer, other members of the group can support. Thus, if the lecturers know how to encourage and evaluate their efforts in a positive way, the student will engage in the tasks more enthusiastically.

One fact is that the lecturer cannot listen to all pairs or groups at the same time, especially overcrowded classes, but it does not mean that he/she is unable to do anything about it. The teacher should establish certain rules at the beginning of the school year and apply them strictly enough for the students to follow. For instance, in Speaking period, the lecturer can play the role of the "English Police" and look for "offenders" - those who speak their mother language - giving them a punishment. After some time being punished, the students can establish the good habit of speaking only English by themselves.

Various kinds of organizing pair/ group work activities:

It will be very boring if the lecturer sets the pair and the group in one way and never changes it. A wide variety of activities create more excitement to stimulate the students' participation in the tasks. Then, the pair should be "Teacher – Student", "Student – Student", "Group into Pair", "Pair into Group", etc. If the lecturer can arrange time for these types of activities to be carried out in class, the effectiveness in both teaching and learning will be higher and higher.

Class size adjustment:

The size of the classroom has a significant impact on the effectiveness of English classes. Every English class should have 15-20 students, 25-30 students / class is acceptable, but 40 - 50 students / class is very difficult to organize practical activities. But in fact, due to the unbalance between the number of lecturers and the number of students, some classes are still over 40 , even over 50. The large number of students makes it difficult for the lecturer to apply the teaching method in the direction of communication (Communicative Language Teaching) as well as organize practical activities such as pair work and group work. Since students have a few opportunities to practice practical skills with their teachers and friends, they do not form the habit of using English in the classroom. An exciting class is very positive for both lecturers and students, however, since there is not enough time for the lecturers to carry out activities, the "Learner-centered" method sometimes seems unfocused.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate Quang Binh university non-majors perception and attitudes concerning pair and group work as well as current situation of the exploitation of these activities in English class. The results, on one hand, showed the positive perception and attitude, which helps the lecturers be more motivated to apply these practical activities in teaching; it, on the other hand, analyzed the reality with the clear objective and subjective reasons leading to this reality. More importantly, the paper gave some solutions with the aims of improving activity conducting methods so as to make learning and teaching in every English class more efficient and successful. It is hoped that English lecturers at Quang Binh university and those who may concern carefully consider the results of this paper to change their behaviour and adapt this strategy of teaching and learning more appropriately in the classroom.

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AN INVESTIGATION OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENT ERRORS AT QUANG NAM UNIVERSITY IN WRITING AND LESSONS DRAWN AFTER TUTORING STUDENTS

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Abstract

In the age of globalization and integration, English has become essential in terms of communication among various peoples from all over the world. One of the basic language skills which is so crucial for varied communicative purposes is writing. However, over the past years it has not received due attention in English learning and teaching in our teaching context. Learners should be aware of the importance of this skill in communication. To help learners develop this special productive skill is a must. Learners need to be exposed to written English and need to be taught in such a way that they can produce writing pieces which are not only grammatically correct but also logically presented to satisfy various real-life communicative purposes. To achieve this goal, this article will identify some common first- year student errors in writing with a view to helping them develop this skill effectively.

Keywords: errors, mistakes, writing tasks, peer proof-reading.

There is no doubt that when one wants to acquire language, whether one's mother tongue or a foreign language, one has to develop the four basic language skills in an integrated way. However, it is obvious that certain skills are preferentially developed for personal reasons or various communicative ones. Of the four basic language skills, writing is a productive one which is so demanding and challenging for learners of English in general and Vietnamese learners of English in particular for several reasons. In order to write satisfactorily, whether for academic or any other real-life communicative purposes, the learner has to activate not only language competence but also logical thinking and background knowledge. Learners find it really difficult to develop writing skills even in their native language. In reality, writing is an effective communicative means and an important information channel in today's changing world of multi-media technology. In Vietnam, English has been widely taught and learnt as a foreign language to meet the demands of integration to regional and world scholarship. New methods and communicative approaches have been almost universally used with a view to improving learning and teaching quality with an obvious shift of focus from reading comprehension to listening and speaking. In actual fact, over the past years so much importance has been attached to the other language skills, namely listening, speaking and reading that writing still has not received due attention. Vietnamese learners of English are not really engaged

in writing until they start college. Consequently, when it comes to writing, they tend to make a number of errors which can greatly affect the message they want to convey.

According to H. Douglas Brown (1994), in his book *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, mistakes, misjudgments, miscalculations, and erroneous assumptions form an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information. Second language learning is a process that is clearly not unlike first language learning in its trial –and – error nature. Inevitably, learners will make mistakes in the process of acquisition, and indeed will even impede that process if they do not commit errors and then benefit in turn from various forms of feedback on those errors.

H. Douglas Brown's (1994) definition of mistake is as follows: "A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip," in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly". The author stated that "an error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner".

The causes of students' errors in writing

It is crucial to determine the causes of students' errors in writing in order to come up with appropriate solutions. These causes can be both objective and subjective.

Little attention is paid to the integration of language skills in the process of teaching and learning English. For instance, little importance is attached to post-tasks which help to integrate skills. Correction has not been implemented appropriately. For example, there might not be enough time for correction or students might be confused about what is being corrected and thus cannot learn from their own mistakes or their classmates'. Or, too much correction can discourage students from making an attempt at writing.

Students tend to make these errors for various reasons. The major reason is the marked differences between English and Vietnamese. Native language interference affects to a great extent. The writing tasks in the course books may not be appropriate in terms of level of difficulty, authenticity and/ or variety of topics.

As freshmen, they have not been exposed to written texts as means of communication. They have hardly had any chance to communicate by writing even though they can speak very fluently. They are not familiar with expressing themselves in writing because this is the first time they have written something using their own ideas. Students are not very good at productive skills, especially writing. They are afraid to express their ideas explicitly because they are not confident of their ideas and their errors are more conspicuous than when speaking.

Students do not feel highly motivated when they have to carry out writing tasks because they tend to think that writing requires a lot of creativity while they are unsure of their ability. Students lack background knowledge and they find it hard to apply what they have learnt while developing other language skills such as listening or reading.

From my teaching context, I have identified a great number of common errors in my students' writing which need to be dealt with. In order to improve the writing skill of learners of English, especially my first-year language students at Quang Nam University, I have made an investigation into common errors in writing made by the first-year language students with a view to determining the causes of these errors and coming up with solutions to help students produce good writing for academic or communicative purposes.

At my college, writing is a subject matter in which students can practice writing in a variety of genres from notes to essays based on authentic materials compiled by the university's lecturers. I am in charge of Writing 1. I teach students to write at the sentence level. From their writing in the classroom and their mid-term and end-of-term tests, I have identified the common errors to be related to such aspects as Word order, Wrong words, Pronouns, Misuse of to be, Verb forms, Subject- verb agreement, Ungrammatical sentences, Sequence of tenses, and Prepositions.

Lessons learned

From the identified errors committed by students in writing, and my tutoring experiences, I have drawn some lessons as follows. To increase students' competence in writing through beneficial feedback on their errors, it is necessary to:

Raise student awareness of the differences of the two languages so that they can avoid making mistakes in the process of writing. Lecturers can help students do a brief revision of the language areas with which students often have difficulty and tend to make errors. For instance, from the common errors identified, lecturers can categorize the errors and provide relevant revision tips accordingly.

Provide students with a sufficient amount of time to complete the tasks they are asked to do. If they do not have enough time, they cannot do them satisfactorily. There should also be a limit of time so that they can know what is expected of them and can get used to working under pressure.

Encourage students to think in English while generating ideas. Before students get down to writing, they think about what they are going to write through activities such as brainstorming, mind mapping, and free -writing. The lecturers then elicit their ideas asking them to speak in English. This will prevent students from writing in Vietnamese and then translating into English.

Adapt topics or activities to suit students' level, ability and needs. Accordingly, students can write about the topics within their level and focus on accuracy. Lecturers can implement the sharing of writing to enhance cooperative learning and build up students' confidence so that they can benefit from their peers' language competence as well as performance in that they can identify their own or their peers' errors and then can self-adjust.

Design a wide range of meaningful writing tasks to ensure students' full engagement. For example, there are some for the good ones and some for the less able so that they both can complete their tasks satisfactorily with a focus on accuracy.

Create an encouraging atmosphere in writing classes and help students learn how to appreciate their own writing as well as their classmates' through exchanging and exhibiting their production.

Give an emphasis on proof-reading, and on peer proof-reading because the students themselves cannot detect their own mistakes. Lecturers should clearly instruct students to do this for any piece of writing they produce. Students tend to overlook this because they are short on time or they cannot see the benefits of proof-reading. Lecturers can design some proof-reading tasks to help students identify the mistakes they have made so that they themselves can improve their writing.

Enhance student awareness of the common errors by designing tasks in which students have to identify and correct errors found in a short text.

Implement self-correcting and peer-correcting effectively by properly and clearly explaining the procedures and the requirements of the feedback process. Clarify what points need correcting (subject-verb agreement, wrong word, word order, etc.)

Always allocate an appropriate amount of time for self-evaluation, comparison with their partners' writing and correction. For self-evaluation, lecturers have students carry out proof-reading with a certain focus (sequence of tenses, use of prepositions, etc.). Then, lecturers ask them to work in pairs exchanging their writing and giving feedback on their partner's piece of writing. For positive feedback, it is ideal to implement this as a classroom activity so that students can learn from both their own and their classmates' errors. Lecturers should choose the most typical from previous partner feedback to save time and avoid discouraging students with too much correction. For feedback on individuals' writing, lecturers and students can make an effective use of information technology. Students email their pieces of writing to teachers, and teachers provide feedback with a "track changes" feature to indicate their problem areas.

Mastering a foreign language like English is a must in today's ever-changing world of integration and globalization. To acquire English for individual communicative purposes, developing the four basic language skills in an integrated way is the best choice. Therefore,

we cannot afford to ignore writing skills any more. It is time to improve students' writing skills in such a way that they can be flexible, fluent and competent in their writing so that they can write on a variety of subjects not only in language exams but also for numerous communicative demands in a dynamic environment. To achieve this target, it is necessary to identify their common errors so that by carefully processing the feedback they can develop their writing skill effectively, and ultimately they can enhance their communicative skill comprehensively through their good writing. Unlike communication through speaking with its clear context and non-verbal clues, communication through writing mainly relies on precision and accuracy in the message conveyed to ensure its effectiveness. Consequently, learners need to be able to accomplish their language performance in terms of good writing. Hopefully, the above-discussed matters can be beneficial to both lecturers and learners of English.

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DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL READING SKILLS THROUGH RAISING THEIR AWARENESS OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS THEORY

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Abstract

This is a report of the mini-project research carried out on a group of 3rd - year students at Hue University of Foreign Languages to explore the impact of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory on students' critical reading ability. During 6 weeks of the study, the control group was guided in reading socio-political texts following the traditional approach while the experimental group was introduced to the Critical Discourse Analysis theory as they pursued the same reading assignment. At the end of the study, questionnaires to investigate students' awareness towards critical reading skills were administered and mutual discussions were held for both groups to exchange their stories of experience. The results reveal positive signals to support the hypothesis that students' critical reading skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) can be enhanced through the intensive introduction of CDA - a theory that examines the uses of language in social context and the ideology hidden behind language.

Keywords: critical reading; EFL; critical discourse analysis.

Critical reading skills of efl students

Reading in university contexts is obviously fundamental to the formation of both a language skill and a professional command for students. Students reading ability will, to some extent, have considerable impacts on their performance in other language skills (e.g., college writing) and their own discipline's practices (e.g., research skills, presentation skills or internalisation of specific subjects). Critical reading is the process of reading that goes beyond just understanding a text. It involves careful consideration and evaluation of the texts in terms of the interpretation of its hidden notions and the writer's beliefs or attitude. Therefore, it requires that a reader apply certain processes, models and theories that result in enhanced clarity and comprehension. Critical reading refers to an assumption that all texts are crafted objects, written by persons with particular dispositions or orientations to the information, regardless of how factual or neutral the products may attempt to be (Freebody and Luke, 1990). McKinney (1995) (as cited in Wallace, 1999) and Correia (2006), Fredricks (2007), Zingraf (2003) (as cited in Dar et al., 2010) have argued that reading comprehension should not be seen as the mere reading activity in the language classroom. They discussed the importance and necessity of enabling students to relate their reading tasks with analytical thinking and thus become critically aware of the

social and political conditions in which the texts were caught and to use this awareness to affect on these conditions. In addition, critical reading, according to Wallace (1992), is one of many strategies available to the readers; however, it may become very useful when learners encounter texts that contain ideological assumptions and whose interpretation depends largely on sociocultural contexts. That is why the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis outlined in the next part is useful for practical application in the EFL reading classroom.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Since the 1970s when the discourse analysis approach was divided into various sub-categories, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was initiated and developed on the theoretical basis of Critical Linguistics (CL) and the practical application of Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG) by M.A.K Halliday (1985). The fundamental roles of CDA are seeking understanding of the social issues represented within discourse and analyzing the interrelations among thoughts, attitudes, ideology and their manifestation in language, which were claimed by typical linguists namely Kress & Hodge (1979), Fowler et al. (1979), van Dijk (1985), Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (1989). Fairclough's CDA (1985), which originally viewed language as a social practice and also the reflection of that practice, employs Systemic Functional Grammar Theory to unveil the ideological representation in language use through breaking language structures at vocabulary, grammar and discourse levels with specific reference to three meta-functions of language: the ideational or experiential, the interpersonal and the textual functions. The distinctive feature of CDA, as proposed by many effective theorists and practitioners in its development (Van Dijk-2001; Fairclough-1985, 1992), is social justice - CDA describes how language is used and abused in the exercise of power and the suppression of human rights (Widdowson, 1998:96). Fairclough (1992) also points out that the critical issues in CDA lie in the assumption that language is related to the power and the domination in a society. For Fairclough, CDA is an examination of language, which associates linguistic text analysis with a social theory of the functioning of language in political and ideological processes. With a thorough look into the term "critical", van Dijk (2001:96) defines CDA as "discourse analysis with an attitude". This derivationally reflects CDA's nature which is an interdisciplinary approach since it uses the theoretical backgrounds and practices of other disciplines like sociology, philosophy, and cultural study. Basing on these concepts and with reference to research results by other language theorists and practitioners namely Rahimi et al. (2007), Ghazali (2007) and Martinez (2012), which seek to give students additional skills in identifying discursive strategies expressing social values of the texts we have thought of the application of CDA in the language classroom, especially in the EFL reading class, to find out if the awareness of CDA will possibly result in enhancement

of critical reading skills which then assist college students to perform well in working with professional texts, more specifically with socio-political texts.

The study

This study was inspired by Cots' framework (2006) and aimed to investigate the effectiveness of teaching critical reading and the enhancement of overall comprehension of college readers through CDA awareness-raising activities. Two groups of forty 3rd-year students of EFL were involved in the study. They were given socio-political texts for reading comprehension with a content focus on contemporary discourse (i.e. politics and the media). The control group's reading assignment was guided through the traditional approach while the experimental group engaged with a more subtle process where they were made aware of the CDA theory assumptions with insights into the analysis of language in terms of its 3 metafunctions. They were then given the same texts and assignments as the control group. The experimental group were guided to conduct text analysis at the lexical, grammatical and textual levels and in terms of decoding the experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning of texts. The students' text analysis results and their answering of comprehension questions were recorded to serve the later comparison with those from the control group. At the final point of the study, questionnaires with concept-checking questions towards critical thinking skills were administered to students of both groups. Follow-up discussions were held among all students to share their learning experiences related to their text analysis and the comprehension of the texts in terms of clarifying the notional, ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning of the presented language. Finally, reading performance results of the two groups were compared within the discussions to work out the implied impacts of the CDA awareness-raising approach on improving students' critical reading skills.

How does CDA help develop students' critical reading skills?

Three socio-political texts (a news article, a university graduation ceremony speech and a pack of socio-political slogans) with reading comprehension questions and exercises were assigned over the six weeks. Students worked individually and then in groups to answer the questions and do the tasks that followed. The control group's answers perfectly matched the original requirement, which means providing full answers to all the questions of Multiple Choice items or True/False items, but leaving blank almost all the open-ended questions like "*Others, please specify...*" or "*Please provide comment....*", "*What do you think...?*" Meanwhile, these questions were answered more often among CDA group members. In addition, the task of writing a reflection journal on the assigned texts after reading was carried out differently in the two groups. In the control group, points are made based more on the superficial representation of language in the texts, that is to say

“something they can see from the language signals”. In the experimental group, in contrast, the reflection journals proved students’ deep understanding of the language structures in terms of lexical, grammatical and textual choice to reflect the experience of the world, the relationships between communicators and the choice of discourse structure for communication purposes. Students in the latter group also wrote about their recognition of the hidden attitude and ideology behind language use in each of the texts and they realised that the communication of the texts to readers may, to some extent, help narrow or even close the gaps of the unbalanced delivery of power and domination in a society. For example, when analysing the ideational or experiential meaning of the political slogan “*Sunflower dies in November*” in the U.S Presidential Campaign, the control group explained the literal meaning vaguely or failed to explain the experiential meaning of this slogan while the experimental group posed rhetorical questions of whether any kind of metaphor has been used in this slogan and if the issue of the natural law that “flowers usually die in winter” relates to any political practice of the parties. Their concerns matched the original meaning of this slogan. In fact, the cognitive metaphor within the slogan is to signify the opposing view of people from one party towards another in the campaign of the U.S Presidential Election (and Sunflowers are the symbolic flower of Kansas). Or in the case of Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust speech in the commencement ceremony of 2014, her call for tribute and actions were interpreted more profoundly among the latter group. The question of the university leader’s vision revealed in her use of vocabulary, repeated passive or active sentences, metaphor, and nominalisation were raised in the discussions that followed the text analysis.

Through the discussions, students who approached text analysis through CDA theory revealed that they realize a different way of text interpretation and that texts can have more than one meaning depending on Fairclough’s notions of discursive and social practice (1992). Reading activities have subconsciously become interesting and purposeful for them. The representation of meaning has not been limited only to the words themselves. They also realised that the choice of vocabulary and grammatical structures or the theme/rheme patterns of the writers have helped them connect their “thoughts products” with the social practice and reveal attitudes as well as ideology through the use of language. Moreover, the students treasured the value of contexts where language is involved and said it is also the tool to assist discourse interpretation. Students reached a crucial conclusion that CDA techniques really make them aware of the functions of language and help them form a critical mind. Their discourse analysis skills were also enhanced thanks to frequent critical looks at language at all levels. Dar et al. (2010) said having a critical mind helps every man avoid being a follower of every thought. I agree with him and even see more in the notion of having critical minds as “being original” or “having one’s own voice”. Finally, through the study, it is clear that the experimental

students have become more independent in their language performance. They not only have a linguistic theory and practice to rely on, but they also they possess a more professional analysis of language in connection with the social contexts as well. These precious experiences are believed to be of utmost importance to EFL college students whose critical language awareness may serve as the foundation for the acquisition of other skills, of all later professional development capacity and of self's behaviour formation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, identifying the processes of text analysis in relation to social contexts, with roots in CDA theory, does not only help to identify the internal building of discourse but also to identify the connotations it implies in language education settings. With reference to CDA application into EFL reading classrooms through this study, the awareness-raising of CDA among students has been once again proved supportive to shifting learners' perspectives towards text analysis with awareness of power, dominance, inequality and bias and the interrelations of discourse and social practice. These all help students become more mature in dealing with socio-political texts while developing their critical reading skills which are essential to their language competence performance. We hope and make a commitment to have more insights into the application of CDA in language classrooms in the near future.

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DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION USING THE QUESTIONING METHOD AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

Developing critical thinking is highly considered an extremely effective strategy to acquire a language. In parallel, the roles of the questioning method and computer-mediated collaborative learning theory are receiving attention as crucial catalytic elements to promote students' critical thinking. In this study, the information provided by student interviews, student surveys and observations at a class at Ha Tinh University showed that most of the students were very passive in receiving and expressing their views. In order to address this problem, a combination of methods of questioning and computer-mediated collaborative learning was applied. Findings from the study clarify the effects of using these methods on foreign language acquisition. The students are now more active in terms of gaining the knowledge provided in a critical way. They feel interested in working collaboratively on the questions organized by the lecturer on the Internet. However, some challenges emerge originating from the weak students in the class. Based on the results, a new plan for applying the questioning method in teaching foreign language should be developed to address the questions raised during the research.

Keywords: critical thinking, computer-mediated collaborative learning, foreign language acquisition.

Introduction

How to improve foreign language learners' competence always appeals to language teachers. During the lessons in class, the teacher in this study finds that most of the learners are very passive in participating in all activities organized by the teacher. In addition, the required tasks in the class normally do not encourage students to use their experience in approaching the issue.

Promoting students' critical thinking in second language acquisition is a highly valued goal. The questioning method and computer-mediated cooperative learning seem to work as effective tools in developing the learners' thinking critically. This study examines the effects of these two methods on English acquisition in a major class at Ha Tinh University. The threaded question that needs to be addressed throughout the study is how the teacher can use these methods to develop the learners' critical thinking in language acquisition. The findings in this research show the learners' effective improvements in terms of motivation, knowledge achievement and critical learning. However, the learners seem still

to expect the teacher's conclusion about the discursive issues. This requires further step to address.

Online threaded questions and critical thinking in second language acquisition

Investigating the effects of critical thinking on foreign language learning, Atkinson (1997) claims that critical thinking is a social practice which embodies Western cultural values. However, these values, to some extent, are inappropriate for non-Western classrooms. In order to support this view, Nisbett (2010), who studies critical thinking in EFL contexts, points out that critical thinking is the key process including evaluating, forming opinions, and taking action, while the Japanese (and other Asian) students are challenged when expressing their opinions. This is the result of Eastern culture. Benesch (1993a) describes critical thinking as "a democratic learning process examining power relations and social inequities" (p. 547). By this she, on the one hand, agrees with Atkinson (1997) in terms of considering critical thinking as a kind of social practice; on the other hand, she opposes the view which suggests critical thinking as an unquestioned social practice.

Another stance is taken by Davidson (1995). The researcher acknowledges that critical thinking seems further than voicing one's own opinion. When the Japanese learners do not show their opinions, they are not necessarily accepting all what they hear (Little Wood, 2000; Stapleton, 2002). In another research, Arend (2009) claimed that discussion was one of the tasks positively related to learners' use of the critical thinking learning strategy.

Supporting the potential claims of benefits of critical thinking in second language acquisition and the effects of online interaction (Warschauer, 1997), this study applies the questioning method and computer-mediated collaborative learning, which are considered effective strategies regarding developing learners' critical thinking. As Gunter, Estes, and Mintz (2010) explain further, the success of a classroom discussion is decided by the types of questions that teachers prepare. They point out, "good questions are educative – they provide the opportunity for deeper thought" (p.192). In parallel, collaborative learning contributes to assist students through their own zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1981). Students can bridge the gap in cooperation with others. In addition, online communication can encourage both reflection and interaction, which is highly considered as the critically important intersection in education. Moreover, the computer-mediated form is easily transmitted, archived, stored, edited, reevaluated, rewritten and also flexible regarding time. Therefore, a combination of the questioning method and computer-mediated learning may enhance the learners' critical thinking in respect to promoting motivation, collaboration and positive language learning.

Application of the questioning method and computer-mediated form

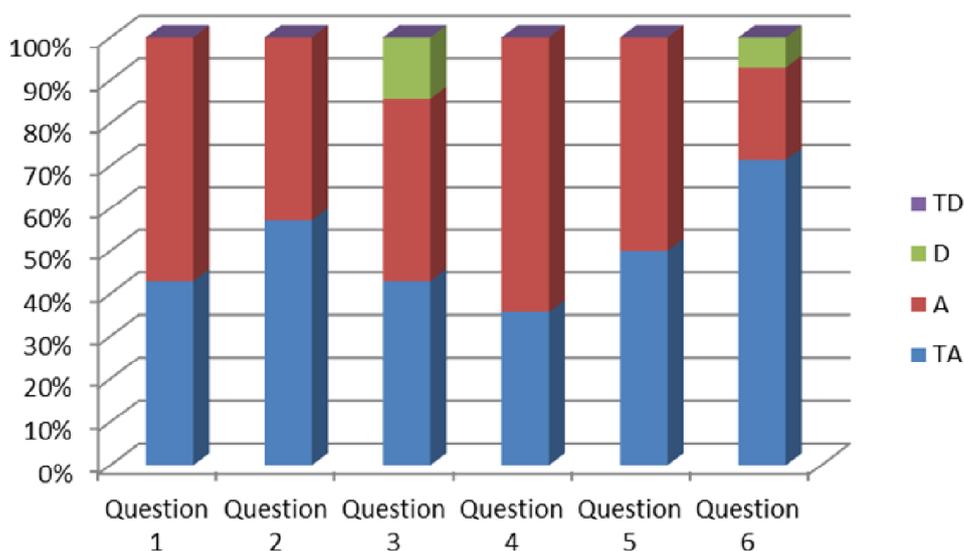
Through observing fourteen the third-year-Vietnamese learners of English, the researcher in this study finds that most of the students are very passive in gaining new knowledge. They often feel the lessons are boring and monotonous. In addition, only face to face interaction in class cannot help all the students to have numerous opportunities to collaborate with one another.

With the benefits mentioned by prior researchers above, a combination of the questioning method and computer-mediated collaborative learning is highly considered as an effective tool for acquiring language. The researcher, as well as the teacher in this study, designed the questions for students to discuss based on the framework, namely, communication, reason and self-reflection. These components, according to the Socratic questioning method, function as the core of enhancing critical thinking. And the learners, therefore, when addressing the required questions also communicate and use reasons to build their ideas. They use their metacognitive ability for self-reflection about their own learning. To make the lessons more interesting, the teacher posed the questions online and students responded, arguing about the questions and with each other for a few days for each issue.

In the following example, on the first day of the discussing session, the teacher posed the question online, *What is lexicology according to lexicologists?* With respect to this question, there were more than fifteen entries showing different views in different communities regarding lexicology. All of the students tried to argue the points of view given by the prior students by suggesting different stances. In relation to the first question, the following one was: *What are the reasons for the differences among these definitions according to you?* This question satisfies the basis of reason in addressing issues, which Socrates highly considered as the crucial component promoting critical thinking. This means, any claims often originate from a particular setting. Different communities form different ideas. The third day of the discussion followed with the question: *What are the differences between your perception and prior researchers' regarding lexicology?* This question helped the learners to reflect upon putting the term in their setting and conclude what they experience through communication. The learners could find the gap needing to be addressed and they were then suggested to provide the causes by arguing the final question: *What are your views of lexicology affected by?* This thread of questions hopes to encourage learners to interact with one another while building critical thinking in lexicology. The learners can defend their views by giving evidence and discussing reasonably. They can also gain new knowledge suggested by the other students' responses. This can help them to promote language competence.

Reflection

The study was based on two criteria when the reflective questions were designed. Those were perceived English knowledge ability and attitudes toward studying English. To evaluate the effects of the questions posed online, a combination of two methods applied. Through observation, the teacher, the researcher found that, generally, the questioning method tends to promote students' critical thinking effectively. All of the students had balanced opportunities to show their ideas and interaction. Also, cooperative online group-work encouraged students' motivation and participation. In accordance with what could be observed, the numbers in the chart below are the result of six reflective statements collected from the fourteen learners. It shows the learners' positive attitudes towards the online questioning method.



Satisfactory degrees of students towards online threaded questions

It can be seen, most of the participants agreed that they were facilitated to use their experience to address the required questions critically. They could also reflect the theory of lexicology on their community, and this promotes language competence. In addition, online discussion provoked the learners' interests in the lessons and did not make them feel negative in terms of time management. Regarding almost 3 % of learners' disagreement on interests in online discussion at home, one further question was used to clarify. The answer unpacked is because they do not have computers at home. This is also the reason for the lack of time management which happened to one learner in question six.

Nevertheless, a significant issue raised that needs further solution is that most of the students still wait for the final conclusion for the given questions coming from the teacher. They still suspect themselves and their classmates' ideas. And it is easy to identify that the number of good students' participation is still dominant in the arguments.

Conclusion and implication

The study takes an insightful look at the online collaborative questioning methods. The application of these tools into language acquisition as extra-activities reconfirms their effects. This has been referred to by prior researchers. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the questioning method and computer-mediated collaborative learning in teaching due to their benefits. However, weaker students need more opportunities to show their ideas. This suggests further changes in question building by the teacher in the recycled plan in the future.

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PERCEPTION AND COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH INTONATION BY VIETNAMESE LEARNERS

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Abstract

The paper investigates the perception and comprehension of English intonation by Vietnamese learners. This is a quantitative descriptive research which employs perception and comprehension tests to describe the investigated issue regarding Halliday's (1967) trio of tonality, tonicity and tone. First, in terms of perception, the findings show that most of the learners can perceive English intonation patterns although their correct perception, to some extent, is interfered by their own perceptual assumption. Second, in terms of comprehension, the learners can interpret the unmarked features of intonation whereas they struggle with the marked ones. In fact, the Vietnamese learners apply the two strategies such as L1 transfer and L2 knowledge in acquiring English intonation. The transfer itself both facilitates and interferes with the acquisition process.

Keywords: English intonation, Vietnamese, tonal language, perception, comprehension

Introduction

English intonation plays an indispensable role in organizing information, signifying syntax and expressing attitude in the language. The mastery of intonation ensures learners of English communicative competence. Wells (2006) insists native speakers can ignore non-native speakers' segmental errors, "but they do not make allowances for errors of intonation" (p.2). Nevertheless, English intonation has not achieved adequate attention in teaching, learning and second language (L2) research. In fact, it is observed that Vietnamese learners of English may not be able to communicate effectively and naturally due to little intonation knowledge. Furthermore, there is the tendency of little intonation research in L2 acquisition and teaching. Different researchers share the same notion that segmental aspects of speech attract more interest and emphasis than supra-segmental ones. "Intonation is only slowly gaining in status as an integral component of pronunciation and overall language competence" (Chun, 2002, p.84). Tench (1996) says that even rhythm receives more focus than intonation "because of its crucial role in poetry" (p. 1). The significance of intonation in English acquisition as well as little adequate attention to intonation research and teaching motivates me to explore the acquisition of English intonation by L2 learners. Specifically, the study investigates the perception and comprehension of English intonation by Vietnamese learners. This quantitative descriptive research aims at exploring the questions how the students perceive and comprehend different intonation patterns in terms of Halliday's (1967) trio of tonality, tonicity and tone.

Background

Vietnamese Tones and Intonation

Vietnamese is a syllable-timed tonal monosyllabic language which has six contrastive lexical tones separated into two pitch ranges. The higher consists of *ngang* (high level), *sắc* (high rising) and *hỏi* (gradual fall-rise) whereas the lower has *huyền* (falling), *nặng* (low falling) and *ngã* (glottalized fall and abrupt rise) (Nguyen & Ingram 2006). In spite of the tonal feature, Vietnamese still has intonation patterns which are both “independent” from and “dependent” on its tone system. On the one hand, Vietnamese intonation patterns do not change the pitch contours on syllables. On the other hand, tones are the base for pitch movement, i.e. the intonational rise or fall starts from the existing pitch of lexical tones over syllables and is the series of pitch change of separate syllables. For example, Ha (2010) studies Vietnamese monosyllabic utterances used as markers of backchannels or information requests and finds that their falling or high level tone is added with the intonation patterns by lowering or raising the tone pitch. Do, Tran & Boulakia (1998) find that neutral declarative sentences have “a general F₀ declination line” which is the gradual decrease of the pitch of the lexical tones (p.405). Besides, yes-no questions and imperative structures can be divided into two parts. The first is similar to the declarative structure which has the gradual pitch declination, and the second is an utterance-final marker which has the rising contour.

English Intonation

English is a stress-timed language in which intonation plays a significant role in organizing information, signifying syntax and expressing attitude. The three important aspects of English intonation are tonality, tonicity and tone (Halliday, 1967). Particularly, tonality is defined as a process of segmenting or chunking utterances into intonational phrases or tone units, which depends on the way the speaker organizes information structures. Tonicity mentions the prominence or focus of information in a tone unit. And tone is perceived as contrastive pitch variations within tone units.

Each aspect of the trio is described to have neutral/ unmarked and marked features. First, neutral tonality refers to the alignment between the boundaries of an intonation unit and those of a clause, i.e. a clause is an intonation unit. The two marked possibilities of tonality are “the tone group is more than one clause and that the tone group is less than one clause” (Halliday, 1967, p. 20). Second, Halliday (1967) characterizes both neutral tonicity and marked tonicity, whose distinction depends on the place of the tonic syllable in the tone unit. Regarding neutral tonicity, the tonic syllable is the last stressed syllable in a tone unit or “the tonic falls on the last element of grammatical structure that contains a lexical item” (Halliday, 1967, p. 22). Regarding marked tonicity, there are two forms, including “a lexical element that is not final” and “a final element that is not lexical” (Halliday, 1967, p. 23).

Third, Tench (1996) provides the description of only the three following tones- falling, rising and fall-rise- according to two criteria, information status and communicative function. Particularly, the three tones express different statuses of information thanks to their positions in utterances. The falling tone indicates complete or major information. The rising tone mentions incomplete or minor information status. And the fall-rise expresses certain implications or highlights marked themes. On the other hand, Roach (2000) adds two more tones, the rise-fall and level tone. The rise-fall evokes surprise. The level tone means boredom or routine. He also comments that these two tones are not significantly necessary for second language learners to acquire (Roach, 2000, p. 157).

Methodology

Participants

The participants are 227 Vietnamese freshmen majoring in English. The data were collected after they had taken a course of English pronunciation in which intonation is implicitly introduced in different dialogues specifically designed for segmental training and explicitly taught via context-free short sentences. Fundamental functions of intonation are also presented with simple concepts of certain tones.

Instruments

Perception tests

Perception tests are 10-multiple-question questionnaires which aim at eliciting the data regarding how students perceive different intonation patterns in terms of tonality, tonicity and tone. These questions and their recordings are from Wells (2006). Particularly, the first three questions ask students to recognize intonation phrases thanks to pauses between tone units. Questions 4, 5 and 6 focus on recognizing the focus which carries the most important information and is expressed by the strongest pitch. The last four questions involve the recognition of tone choice. Students have to decide whether the speaker uses the falling tone, the rising tone or the fall-rise tone, the most three frequent tones in English.

Comprehension tests

After the perception tests, comprehension tests are 20-multiple-choice questions which are used to explore students' understanding of English intonation. Students read the given contexts and choose the most suitable saying. The first 7 questions involve the aspect of tonality, i.e., students have to understand the meanings of utterances correctly according to different ways of tone unit formation. The next 6 questions refer to the aspect of tonicity, that is, students have to express their comprehension of different focus placements. The last 7 questions involve the comprehension of tone use. The utterances are from Tench (1996).

Findings and discussion

Findings

Perception tests

Tables 1 and 2 show that there is a high percentage of the students who are able to perceive tonality or boundaries between tone units as well as tonicity or focus placement.

Table 1: Students' perception of tonality

Item	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Tonality Q1 ³	215	94.7	12	5.3
Tonality Q2	126	55.5	101	44.5
Tonality Q3	218	96	9	4
Total	559	82	122	18

Table 2: Students' perception of tonicity

Item	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Tonicity Q4	174	76.7	53	23.4
Tonicity Q5	188	82.8	39	17.2
Tonicity Q6	204	89.9	23	10.1
Total	566	83.1	115	16.9

Regarding the students' perception of tone, a more complex picture is drawn from the results. Table 3 below shows the contradictory trends in the results of the four questions regarding tone in the perception tests. On the one hand, there are significantly more incorrect choices by the students in Question 7 and 10 in which WH-questions carries the fall, the unmarked feature of tone. On the other hand, more correct answers can be found in Question 8 and 9, which involve the marked features of tone such as the seemingly unfamiliar fall-rise and the declarative rise. The total shows the much higher percentage of the students' incorrect perception of tone.

³ "Tonality Q1" refers to Question 1 which aims at the aspect of tonality.

Table 3: Students' perception of tone

Item	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Tone Q7	45	19.8	182	80.2
Tone Q8	120	52.9	107	47.1
Tone Q9	148	65.2	79	34.8
Tone Q10	40	17.6	187	82.4
Total	353	38.9	555	61.1

Comprehension tests

Figure 1 illustrates that a higher percentage of the students are able to interpret the meanings of the various structures which differ in phrasal chunking. However, the discrepancy between correct and incorrect answers among these questions is different. Such difference may result from the students' familiarity with the structures.

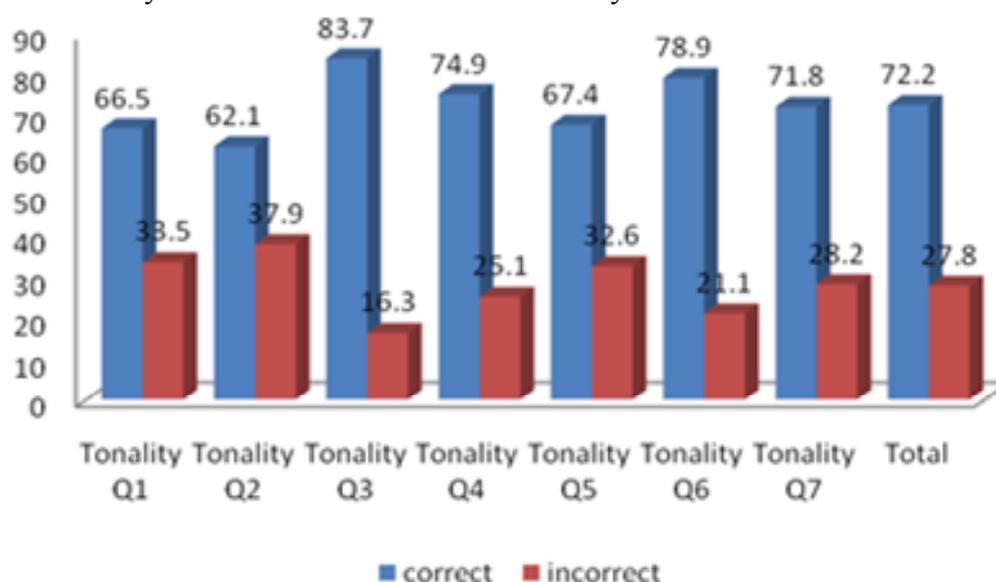


Figure 1: Students' comprehension of tonality

Table 4 provides a clearer picture of the difference among the items thanks to the descending order of their correctness which is particularly as follows: lists, reported speech, relative clause, object complement, verb phrase and adjunct.

Table 4: Students' comprehension of tonality

Item	Correct	Incorrect
Tonality Q3	83.7	16.3
Tonality Q6	78.9	21.1
Tonality Q4	74.9	25.1
Tonality Q7	71.8	28.2
Tonality Q5	67.4	32.6
Tonality Q1	66.5	33.5
Tonality Q2	62.1	37.9

The picture of the students' comprehension of tonicity is more complex.

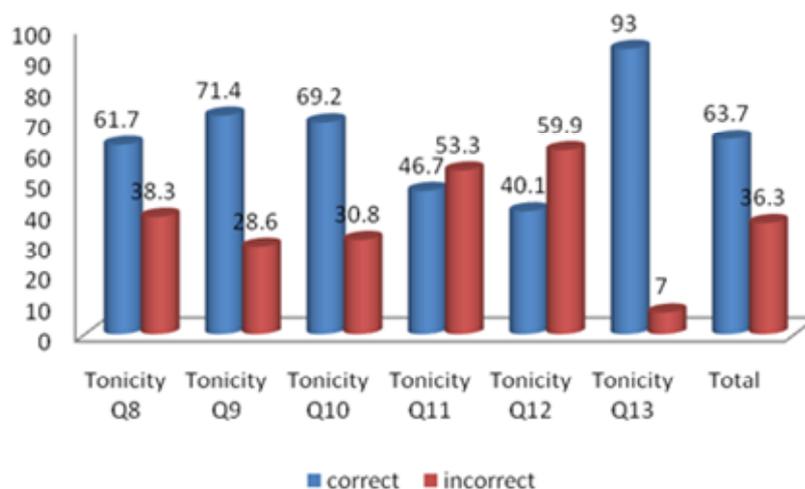


Figure 2: Students' comprehension of tonicity

When all responses are totalized, the correct answers make up a higher percentage than the incorrect ones. However, each item shows a great difference between correct and incorrect choices. It is observed that the students perform the best in comprehending neutral tonicity and have certain difficulties in interpreting marked tonicity. First, most students correctly understand Question 13, which tests neutral tonicity. Second, Questions 8 – 10, which focus on distinctive contrasts, cause less difficulty for the students. Third, the low degree

of correct choices can be realized in Questions 11 and 12, in which given information is the focus of the utterance for the purpose of echoing and insisting.

In terms of the students' comprehension of tone, a much more complicated picture is reflected from the findings.

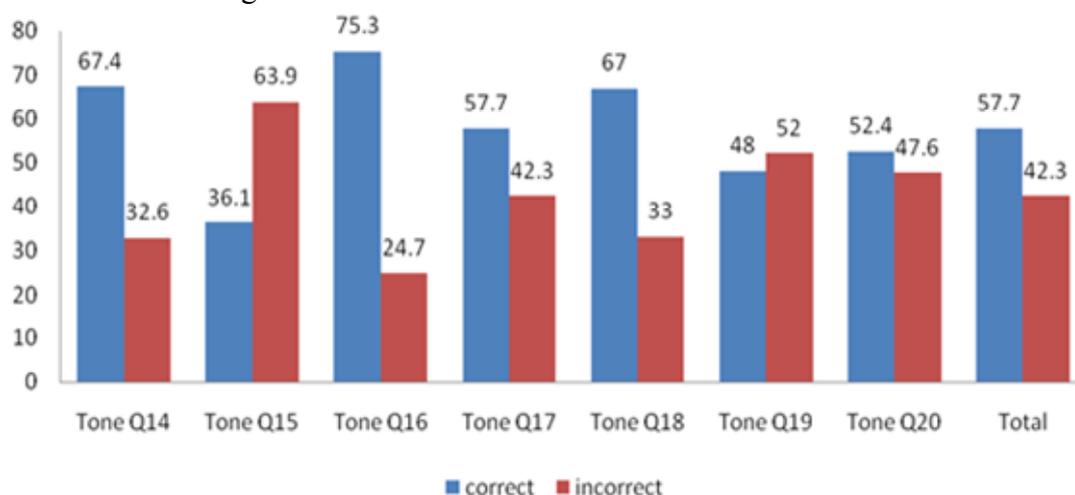


Figure 3: Students' comprehension of tone

First, it is easier for the students to interpret the unmarked meanings of tones. The students' performance is quite low when marked functions of tone are involved. Questions 14, 16, 17 and 18 receive more correct answers because they investigate unmarked features of tone. Questions 15, 19 and 20 show the students' poor performance when they encounter marked features of tone. Question 20 involves the yes-no question and falling tone, whereas the neutral tone should be the rising. Question 19 investigates the WH-question and rising tone, which implies that the listener may not hear the questions and wants the speaker to repeat it. Question 15, which causes the highest degree of difficulty, involves the structure in which the main clause precedes the subordinate clause. The students seem to be familiar with the reverse order of this structure and expect the falling tone at the end of the utterance; therefore, they perform very low in interpreting the status of information expressed by tones in the structure. Second, between the two functions of the fall-rise, the students find it easier to understand the function of highlighting than that of implying. This observation is reflected by the different discrepancy in Question 16 and 17; the fall-rise in the former highlights the marked theme whereas that in the latter provokes certain implications.

Discussion

Students' perception of English intonation

It can be concluded from the findings that most of the research subjects are able to perceive English intonation in terms of tonality and tonicity. It is noted that the theoretical concepts of tonality and tonicity are not explicitly explained in the course of English Pronunciation.

Such knowledge may be formed via students' own generalizations of their learning of English skills and non-theoretical intonation content in the course.

On the other hand, it is difficult to acknowledge students' ability to perceive English intonation regarding tone. The students do not perform well in two out of four investigated questions. The question is whether the students fail to perceive the pitch movements of the falling tones in WH-questions or whether there are any other reasons behind their incorrect choices. The wrong perception of pitch variations is not a persuasive explanation because the students still perform quite well in the other two questions, which do not involve WH-questions. Dupoux et al. (1999) explores the role of native phonotactics in perceiving non-native speech and concludes that the phonotactic knowledge of native speakers has an effect on their perception of the non-native language. The research by Dupoux et al. (1999) implies that the students may expect and assume the rising tone for questions and think that what they hear is the rising tone. Therefore, briefly speaking, the students may be able to perceive the pitch movements of tone, but their expectations and assumptions can lead to the wrong perception.

To some extent, it is possible to say that the majority of the students are able to perceive English intonation, which is really a good start for their learning and acquiring a second language.

Students' comprehension of English intonation

In terms of tonality, most of the students are able to understand tonality contrasts. Nevertheless, the percentage of correct responses in each investigated question or each aspect of tonality is different; this depends on the students' familiarity and knowledge. The decrease of correct responses is in the following order: lists, reported speech, relative clause, object complement, verb phrase and adjunct. Furthermore, the high percentage of tonality comprehension can be explained by the fact that Vietnamese students have spent a long time studying English grammar. It is true if we replace pauses or vertical lines in the utterances by commas or full stops, the effect on students' performance is predicted to be similar. Therefore, studying English grammar may be an advantage for the students to do well in a comprehension test regarding tonality and interpreting the meanings of tonality contrasts.

The knowledge of English grammar may facilitate the comprehension of tone unit segmentation, but it does not help students in interpreting the meanings of tonicity and tone. The evidence is that the students' performance in these two aspects shows quite a complex picture of their ability to understand the meaning of focus placement and tone choice. Particularly, the students have a high percentage of correctness in interpreting neutral or unmarked tonicity. Marked tonicity brings more difficulties to them but, to some extent, about two thirds of them are able to understand marked tonicity contrasts. What

really challenges the students is tonicity by default, in which given information is still the focus in tone units and has the function of echoing or insisting. In fact, this is not what the students expect and are familiar with. They expect a shift of focus when a piece of information is repeated. In a similar situation, the students are able to interpret the meanings of unmarked tones. For example, the falling tone refers to the complete and/ or major status of information; the rising tone the incomplete and/ or minor status; and the default tone of declaratives is the falling tone, that of yes/no questions is the rising tone, etc. Besides, it is easier for students to understand the fall-rise tone's function of highlighting than implying. On the other hand, the students do not show a high performance in interpreting marked functions of tone. Their performance is also very low in the structures which they find unusual or unexpected.

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ENSURING FAIRNESS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING TESTING IN ULIS - VNU

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Abstract

Vietnam has undergone a great change in language testing and assessment for the last few years. English is the first and foremost criterion whether you are applying for a job or you are seeking admission in a reputed university or institution. For this reason, the National Foreign Language Project 2020 requires learners of different grades in Vietnam to have a certain English proficiency level of CEFR before graduation. ULIS-VNU is one of the first universities in Vietnam to apply English standard requirements for students of different programs and bring four language skills into assessment. Among four skills tested, it has been widely recognized that speaking is the most difficult language skill to assess (Sari, 2004). This paper shares ULIS-VNU's hands-on experience in ensuring fairness in English speaking testing, which includes planning and developing an English speaking test; methods to ensure the validity and reliability in scoring; test administration and access to test takers.

Keywords: test, speaking testing, validity, fairness.

Introduction

Fairness in language testing has always been a concern among test developers, test users and test researchers. There has been considerable debate in educational measurement about fairness, especially fairness in testing productive skills like speaking and writing. Despite being considered the most important part of any EFL courses, the difficulties in testing speaking skill frequently lead to the ignorance of oral tests in many teaching and testing programs. In Vietnam, speaking testing used to lag behind the importance given to teaching this skill in the curriculum. And even now, in many schools, colleges and universities in Vietnam, speaking is not tested at all. According to Hughes (1989), teachers recognize the importance of relevant and reliable assessment for providing vital information to the students about the progress made and the work to be done. They also realize the importance of backwash of speaking testing on learning and teaching during the course. Most teachers would accept that "if you want to encourage oral ability, then test oral ability" (Hughes, 1989). However, due to the problems encountered in testing oral ability, many teachers and institutions are reluctant to take it on. The problems may include the practical time arrangement, human resource, test design and rater consistency. And according to Sari Luoma (2004), among the macro skills of language, speaking is the most

difficult language skill to test. And ensuring fairness in speaking testing is of great importance but not always attainable.

The University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS-VNU) is one of the first universities in Vietnam requiring students to reach a certain standard level of English proficiency before graduation. ULIS-VNU is also assigned by the Ministry of Education and Training to organize English proficiency tests for all candidates who wish to have a certificate of their English levels. Whatever format of English tests is applied, speaking is one of the four skills tested. ULIS-VNU is always aware of the importance of ensuring fairness in all aspects of language testing and special attention is paid to speaking testing. ULIS-VNU’s effort is shown through careful planning, professional test designing, speaking test bank building, frequent rater training, and test administration.

Ensuring fairness in English speaking testing

For the last 5 years, ULIS-VNU has been testing all four macro-skills in nearly every English examination. Understanding the difficulties in testing oral ability and the challenges in gaining trust from all people concerned, the test developers and test users in ULIS-VNU have been continuously trying hard to make the speaking tests as fair as possible.

The *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* (the *Code*) prepared by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (1988) presents standards for educational test developers and users in four areas: developing and selecting tests, interpreting scores, striving for fairness and informing test takers. And ULIS-VNU uses the *Code* as a set of guiding principles, which urge both test developers and test users to strive for fairness and testing practices as far as possible for all test takers. According to the *Code*, the main concerns of fairness are summarized as follows:

Table 1: Main concerns of fairness

Main concerns	Specific focus
Validity	construct validity/content and format bias/differential item/insensitive language/stereotyping of test taker groups
Access	financial: affordability/geographical: location and distance/educational: opportunity to learn/ equipment and test conditions
Justice	societal equity/legal challenges

Combining all the factors and procedures for fairness insurance, test developers and test users in ULIS-VNU are doing whatever they can to make their tests in general and their speaking tests in particular valid, reliable and accessible to test-takers and test-score users.

Ensuring fairness via speaking test development

1. Considerations of Test-taker characteristics in test development

According to O'Sullivan, B and Green, A (2009), it is imperative that in designing test for a population of language users, we should take account of any characteristics of the people being tested since any failure to do this can result in tests and inferences informed by test scores that are either biased towards or against particular groups or individuals. For this perspective, when developing a new speaking test that can reflect the needs, interests and ability of test takers, groups of researchers in ULIS-VNU always place them in the centre of testing cycle, involving them in test development and revision. Before the speaking test of any formats is developed, survey questionnaires, interviews and observations are made on test-takers. All the physical/psychological and experimental factors of test takers are taken into consideration such as age, gender, cognitive style, concentration, motivation, affective schemata. The information collected is used in designing test format, task format, task topics and test administration. ULIS-VNU also limit the potential for negative affect by steering clear of the topics that are likely cause upset to some test takers (e.g. death, illness, etc.). According to Khalifa and Weir (2009), "if due care and attention is paid to the test taker at the design and development stage, the chance of serious bias is in all likelihood reduced."

2. Specifications for speaking test and item banking

In ULIS-VNU, test takers take their speaking test in different time allotment and the contents and topics of the tests are different for each time allotment. For this reason, building a bank of speaking tests whose item's difficulty is weighted is of great importance. ULIS-VNU has developed the specifications for individual speaking test tasks with detailed descriptions for each type of prompt intended to elicit a particular sort of response. The task specifications for prompts are instruction for how to write those prompts and need to make clear what sort of response is desired. The language levels and topics are also clearly defined so that the prompts for the same task are the same for every test, making sure that test-takers have a fair chance to perform their speaking ability.

Moreover, ULIS-VNU reduces the danger of test bias and increases the fairness in the content and language level of speaking tests by careful item writing and item banking. Item writer recruitment is strictly conducted. Before starting writing speaking tests, an item

writer has to go through a careful training process and the whole item/test development has to go through various stages of writing, editing, trialing, pretesting, monitoring, evaluation and revision.

Ensuring fairness via the consistency of measurement

One of the most important factors of fairness in oral testing is scoring validity, which accounts for the extent to which test scores are based upon appropriate criteria, exhibit consensual agreement in marking, and are as free as possible from measurement error, stable over time. Weir (2005a) lists the individual parameters that can be regarded relating to scoring validity as follows.

Table 2: Aspects of scoring validity for speaking (adapted from Weir, 2005a)

Scoring validity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criteria/rating scale• Rating process• Rating condition• Rater characteristics• Rater training

In ULIS-VNU, criteria and rating scales are established for all speaking tests. In order to become an oral examiner for an English proficiency examination, teachers are carefully trained. Rater training in ULIS-VNU aims to familiarize prospective speaking examiners with the format of the test, how to conduct tests, the types of test materials used and to give them practice in test conduct with volunteer candidates. Rater training also helps prospective speaking examiners get familiarized with the assessment aspects of the test, such as the assessment scales, criteria and performance descriptors. The retraining is periodically conducted to make sure that raters are consistent in their scoring. Especially, the oral performance of test-takers in all high-stake English proficiency tests in ULIS-VNU is recorded. The recordings are used for random second round scoring and for keeping track of rater reliability.

Ensuring fairness via test administration

ULIS-VNU understand that features of the speaking test setting that relate to timing, room layout and the management of the test by the examiner all have the potential to impact on the rating process and score reliability. Therefore, ULIS-VNU keeps making effort in controlling these features as consistently as possible through procedures that are carefully designed and rigorously implemented. The center for language testing and assessment in ULIS-VNU is aware of an obligation to standardize the administrative requirements of

ULIS's tests so that the chance of systematic score variability resulting from factors associated with the rating conditions can be minimized.

ULIS-VNU has established a set of procedures for conducting a speaking test to make sure that it is administered in the same way whoever is in charge or wherever it takes place. This means that examination staff are provided with precise instructions on what they must do and they are familiar and comfortable with all aspects of the test before administering it. All administrative details are clearly worked out prior the exam.

Ensuring fairness by providing access to test-takers

The focus of this concern is on whether tests are accessible to test takers from various aspects such as financial, educational access and familiarity of test conditions and equipment. In terms of financial access, ULIS-VNU provides affordable tests to nearly every test-taker. In terms of education access, ULIS-VNU provides test-takers with opportunity to learn. According to *the Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, opportunity to learn plays a major role in test-takers' success on test when they have opportunity to learn the materials on which they are assessed. A website (vstep.vnu.edu.vn) was created with all information about the test such as test format, test schedules and test regulations. Especially, ULIS-VNU has booklets of a sample test available to test-takers and has published a book of practice tests for English proficiency examination – VSTEP – the first Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency. In the future, more books of practice tests and test guidelines will be published.

Conclusion

This paper shares ULIS-VNU's hands-on experience in ensuring fairness in English speaking testing. ULIS-VNU understands that in order to gain trust from all stakeholders, more things need to be done. Challenges are still ahead but with determination and with the professional testing staff, ULIS-VNU has, to some extent, proved its capability in the field. In ULIS-VNU's point of view, if a test is not fair there is little or no value in it being valid and reliable.

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**REFLECTIVE JOURNALS – A USEFUL TECHNIQUE
TO DEVELOP READING SKILL FOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS
AT COLLEGES IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AREAS OF NORTHEASTERN VIETNAM**

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Abstract

English has been taught as a compulsory subject in Vietnamese educational institutions since the opened-door policy. Since the Resolution 29-NQ/TW came into effect on 04 November 2013, the Departments of Foreign Languages in Colleges have offered English major students a training program which focuses on promoting students' creativity, students' critical thinking skills, and students' capabilities of lifelong learning, self-studying & self-evaluation. This paper aims to offer reflective journals as a technique to develop critical reading skill for English major students at Colleges in the mountainous area of Northeast Vietnam. Before reflective journals are described in detail, the context of the students is identified. Then, the implementation of reflective journals in Reading course for English major students at Colleges in the mountainous area of Northeast Vietnam is demonstrated. A checklist of assessment criteria for marking a reflective journal is suggested. By keeping their own reflective journals, the learners can reflect their own learning and direct their own learning progress. Furthermore, this technique increases students' capacities of self-studying, self-evaluation and lifelong learning, as well as improves their critical reading skills.

Keywords: Reflective journal, critical reading skill, lifelong learning, formative assessment, self-assessment, College student, Northeast mountainous area.

The context of teaching and learning English Major at Colleges in the mountainous areas of Northeast Vietnam

Regarding educational area, Vietnam's Central Steering Committee has passed the Resolution 29-NQ/TW on 04 November 2013, which proclaims that encouraging life-long learning and enhancing students' creativity, students' critical thinking skills, and students' capabilities of lifelong learning, self-studying and self-evaluation are the main objectives of fundamental and comprehensive innovation in Vietnamese education (Central Steering Committee, 2013). These Governments' policies have been carried out in all the educational institutions in Vietnam including the Northeast mountainous College areas.

We conduct a survey on 83 teachers and 500 students from 9 colleges in the mountainous areas of the Northeast Viet Nam. The results are shown as the followings:

1. The teaching staff

Order	Name of college	No of teacher	Academic			CEFR			Training place	
			B.A	M.A	PhD	B1	B2	C1	Vietnam	Foreign Country
1	Lang Son college of Education	19	10	8	1	1	6	9	16	3
2	Ngo Gia Tu College	10	0	9	1	0	0	8	6	4
3	Thai Nguyen college of Education	5	0	5	0	0	2	2	4	1
4	Cao Bang college of Education	7	4	3	0	0	4	2	7	0
5	Son La college of Education	15	5	10	0	0	4	11	10	5
6	La Cai college of Education	9	5	4	0	0	5	2	7	2
7	Dien Bien college of Education	6	2	4	0	1	1	3	6	0
8	Yen Bai college of Education	6	3	3	0	3	2	1	6	0
9	Bac Kan college of Community	6	2	4	0	0	3	2	5	1
Total		83	31	50	2	5	27	40	67	16

Most of teacher have 1-10 years teaching experience) (62.1%). 32.9% of teachers have been teaching for 11-20 years while only 5% of those have taught for over 20 years. There are only 2 Ph.Ds (2.4%) in total of 83 teachers and 31 teachers who are the Bachelors of Art holding the high percentage (37.3%). Furthermore, the number of teachers trained in foreign country (19%) is less than in Viet Nam. Moreover, half of teachers are at low level of English competence in CEFR. In short, in the teaching progress, most of teachers apply the right and suitable methods, techniques and change teacher-centered into student-centered approach. They also apply information technology in teaching. However, they have to undertake too much duty besides teaching. Also, they have no chance to take part in the workshops, refresher training courses which improve their methods, techniques in teaching and their proficiency competence.

2. Training curriculum

All Departments of Foreign Languages offer English major students a training curriculum with a range of English courses in terms of grammar, lexicon, phonetics, teaching methodology, culture, and language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. One of the main goals of this training course is to enhance students' long-term learning and their capabilities of self-studying and self-evaluation. According to the survey, 44.6 % teachers believe that the training curriculum meet the objectives of the training course and ensure the language proficiency competence when students finish the course. Moreover, 42.8 % teachers state that the proportion between the theory and practical is not suitable. Students study much more general modules than practical modules so they have fewer opportunities to practice skills.

3. Material condition

Most colleges provide the Department of Foreign Languages with the necessary material in teaching and learning process such as cassette players, projectors, and libraries. However, there are some drawbacks. For example, the classes are too large, teachers are not confident to write course books and reference books to replace the ones written by foreign authors. Besides, the libraries of college are very poor, there are not enough computers, no Internets, and reference books. Therefore, students are not interested in coming to the libraries.

4. The learners

Most students are ethnic people from mountainous and remote areas with low living standard. These areas are considered to have "low rate of teaching and learning English" comparing with others in Vietnam. In recent years, students who have considerably lower entrance scores just from 10 to 14 including 3 subjects can enter local colleges. Moreover, students do not find the effective methods to apply in learning process. They only use course book in the syllabus. They neither know how to look for other sources of information such as reference books, Internet, newspapers, or articles nor work in cooperative learning. Therefore, students' language proficiency competence is very low.

It can be seen that more teaching and learning methodologies should be implemented in the Northeast mountainous Colleges. Of the significant techniques, journals are appropriate for the teaching and learning context in this area.

An introduction of Reflective Journals

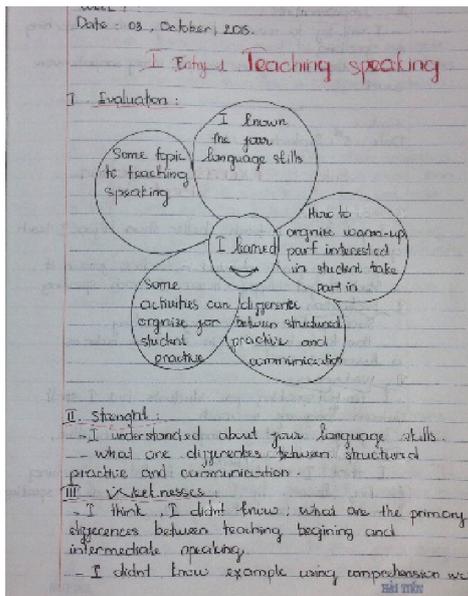
Moon (2006) defines reflective journals as “the form of expression of the reflection” (p. 2). He goes on to suggest a list of purposes of reflective journals including recording experience and enhancing students’ learning from experience (problem-solving skills), developing abilities in critical thinking and reflection, encouraging metacognition, and increasing active involvement in and ownership of learning. According to Boud (2001), reflective journals help people capture experience, record events, explore our feelings, or make sense of what we know. Moon (1999) notes that keeping a reflective journal enables students to be active in their learning, and enhances their critical and independent thinking. In other words, a reflective journal is a record book in which students summarize the text they have read, write down their own views, even their crazy ideas related to the reading texts because student’s thinking is respected. Students are encouraged to develop their capabilities of critical thinking and independent thinking in reading skills. Instead of being concerned with “what students think” as usual, teachers can consider students’ reflective journals as the powerful source to notice “how they think” and “why they think so”. In turn, teachers can understand students’ behaviors and attitudes (Hiller, 2005). From the broader perspective on education, this may lead to some changes in teaching methodologies and the training curriculum in the way that meet the students’ needs. It can be concluded that reflective journals bring great benefits to the process of self-studying and independent & critical thinking.

The implement of Reflective Journals for English major College students in the mountainous areas of Northeast Vietnam

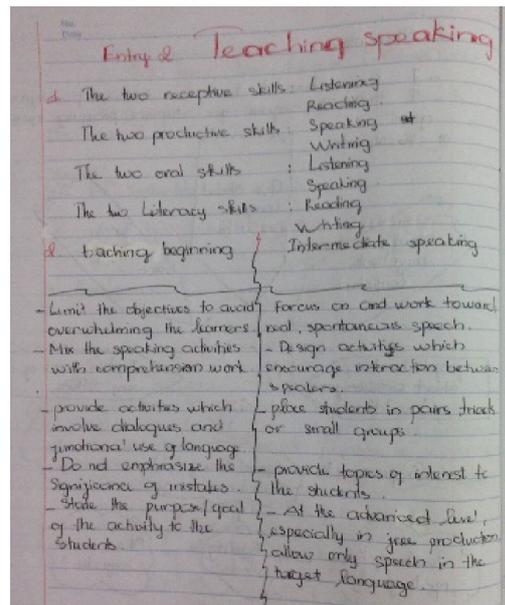
1. The form of Reflective Journals

English Major College students need to keep their own reflective journals in Reading course. There are certain points about the criteria of reflective journals students need to remember-including the week, date, unit and source for each entry which need to be clearly demonstrated. Students need to complete at least three entries per week including two entries for practicing critical reading skills from one text in the course material and one extra reading text, the third entry for self-reflection and self-evaluation in reading skill. These entries promote student to improve their skills of critical thinking, lifelong learning and self-assessment.

Students have the freedom to design the entries of their own journals in a wide range of forms such as a passage, pictures, diagrams, and bullet points to reflect and assess what they have learned and what they plan to do. A couple forms of reflective journals are shown in pictures 1 and 2.



Picture 1: Draw picture to complete Reflective Journals



Picture 2: Use bullet points to complete Reflective Journals

Students are free to write what they reflect upon and evaluate themselves, however, the contents of self-assessment entry should consist of some typical structures such as “My plan is...”; “I found difficult...”; “I enjoyed...” (Brady and Kennedy, 2012, p. 82).

2. Assessment and Evaluation

Students will be introduced about reflective journals and the assessment information of reflective journals at the beginning of the course. The type of assessment is the combination of formative assessment and summative assessment. According to Melland and Volden (1998), formative assessment, which involves ongoing assessment, provides valuable data for the progress of teaching and learning. They assert that formative assessment aims to improve the quality of students’ learning by making adjustments and providing feedback, which inform students where they are, what they need to improve in their learning. Ongoing assessment is relevant for the process of teaching and learning because it provides students with the opportunities to reflect and assess their work-in-progress, receive ongoing feedback from their teachers so that they can keep track of their work and reach their goals (Simmons, 1994). Furthermore, Perkins and Blythe (1994) believe that ongoing assessment is a process by which students know assessment’s criteria, receive feedback from their teachers and their peers, and are given chances for self-reflection and self-assessment from the beginning of and throughout the process of studying. Ongoing assessment is designed to support the learning process for understanding. These benefits of ongoing assessment are in line with the case of the Northeast mountainous Colleges in Vietnam where students are offered a six-semester

training course. There are 15 weeks per semester, so each student is required to maintain a reflective journal from week 1 to week 14 as the records of their weekly work.

In the period from week 2 to week 8, each reflective journal will be checked at least once in class at a random time, so students must bring their journals every day. This time of checking reflective journals is a type of formative assessment with the purposes of providing students with feedback about their learning process, informing them where they are and what they need to improve in their learning, and responding to the students' comments (Brady & Kennedy, 2012). Teachers should give constructive comments such as "You have completed most tasks with a very high standard. You just need to include more articles from outside the course material. You need at least one a week. You can listen to some TED talks and use the transcripts as external articles to respond to".

At the end of week 14, all the students' reflective journals will be collected and marked by the teacher. In this time, students' reflective journals will be given a mark out of 10, which replaces the mark of a progress test in Reading course. Summative assessment should be applied for reflective journals because students may not keep their own reflective journals if they are not given a mark. Grammar and vocabulary used in reflective journals are not marked so students are free to note all of their ideas arisen in their critical reading process. Teacher will use the specific criteria based on students' constant work and behaviors. A checklist of detailed criteria will be used to evaluate and assess students' work. Each tick for a criterion is worth 1 mark.

A checklist of detailed criteria	
Entry	Criteria
Reading Practice	<p>_____ 1. The total entries are at least 28 which are relevant to the topic of the lessons.</p> <p>_____ 2. Half of the entries (14 entries) are from the course material and the others (at least 14 entries) are those which students have found independently. These articles may be speeches, arguments, discussions, lectures, conversations and so on.</p> <p>_____ 3. The length of each article is at least 500 words.</p> <p>_____ 4. Students complete at least 1 entry per week outside the class.</p> <p>_____ 5. All articles need to be referenced (the source information such as title, author, date of the source, page of the source).</p> <p>_____ 6. Each entry needs to include a summary (use the students' words or pictures, diagrams to describe what they identify and understand about the listening), and a response which shows the students' individual reactions and opinions on the author's ideas.</p>

A checklist of detailed criteria	
Entry	Criteria
Self-evaluation & self-reflection in reading skills	<p>_____ 1. Students complete an entry of self-reflection at home at the end of a week. The total entries are 14.</p> <p>_____ 2. Each entry needs to be referenced (week, date, and unit).</p> <p>_____ 3. Students complete an entry of self-reflection at home at the end of a week.</p> <p>_____ 4. Each student is required to write a passage to evaluate and reflect themselves in reading skills. They are given unlimited freedom to write; however, this passage needs to answer the following questions: What have you learned? What sub-skills are you good at (skimming, scanning, summarizing, critical reading...)? What do you need to improve? What exactly do you plan to do?</p>
Total mark	

Conclusion

According to Hillier (2005), by keeping their own reflective journals students can reflect and direct their own learning progress. Moreover, reflective journals are a useful device to increase students' capacities of self-studying, self-evaluation and lifelong learning, as well as improve their critical reading skills. These benefits of reflective journals are appropriate to the purposes of Reading course for English major College students.

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**DIFFERENTIATED EFFECTS OF REFORMULATION VERSUS RECONSTRUCTION TASKS
ON EFL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GENRE-BASED INSTRUCTION**

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Abstract

Written communication is an issue that EFL teachers have to address within the setting of internationalization. Genre-based writing instruction has been suggested after some inadequacies have been found concerning the product and process-based approach to writing teaching. Different methods of genre-based writing instruction have been introduced; however, few studies have focused on the effects of the application of reformulation and reconstruction tasks. An experimental study was attempted to find out the differentiated impacts of the two types of tasks on EFL high school students' writing performance on their attitudes to writing in the light of genre-based writing instruction. A single group of students with a stratification of three levels of proficiency were conveniently selected to join two phases of the study. The reformulation tasks were introduced in Phase 2, experimental time while reconstruction tasks were implemented in the control time in Phase 1. The quantitative data from the pretest and the posttest of the two phases were analyzed to find out whether or not students made progress over ten weeks in their writing ability. Also, the qualitative data acquired from a questionnaire-based survey after the treatment and students' written feedback were considered to get more insights into the extent of confidence and challenge experienced by the students when the tasks were applied. The study shed light into the role of noticing in introducing the different aspects of discourse types (genres) in teaching writing to high school students.

Keywords: Reformulation (REF), Reconstruction (REC), EFL.

Writing approaches and the reality

The recent decades witnessed the major changes in the teaching of writing. The three major movements were brought out to meet the new requirements: "Focus on form", "Focus on the writer" and "Focus on the reader" (Tribble, 2006: 44) and a lot of studies were done to shed some light on writing practicality. Both process approach and genre orientation seem to prioritize learners' awareness of the nature of writing and basic principles of writing situation (Matsuo and Bevan, 2002). Anderson (1993) states that genre-awareness is a prerequisite for "successful written communication" (as cited in

Matsuo and Bevan, 2002) and the outmoded that “writing =grammar/ translation” has been defeated by the fact that successful writing requires “both rhetorical structure and control of grammar” (Hyland, 2009:64). The researchers firmly conclude that learners’ management towards genre-consciousness, forms and strategies, is a “means to empowerment” (Matsuo et Bevan, 2002).

Apart from changes of writing practicality, the last two decades also witnessed the innovation and requirement in the teaching and learning this skill in our country. The challenges and opportunities from economic reforms in 1996, the 1994 degree issued by the Vietnamese Prime Minister for an intermediate level of English proficiency for all government officers and World Trade Organization membership in 2006 made English in Vietnam much more important than ever before (Ton and Pham, 2010) . That is to say, the blossom of innovations in English teaching and learning in the light of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). One example is the English Project 2020 of Ministry of Education which strongly mentions the role of high school education in developing students’ language competence. In terms of writing tests, EFL high school leavers are expected to achieve the competence of Pre-Intermediate (Level B1 in CEFR) so that they can easily adjust themselves to the demands of using English in integration era. Actually, learners’ competence in English for both academic purpose and daily communication is powered up by the educational setting. With such demands for academic purposes and the reality of the contemporary teaching of writing, how are teachers of writing ever going to gauge the effectiveness of current writing approaches to scaffold students’ writing performance? Tribble (1996: 57) raises a question “What makes a piece of writing more acceptable than another?” The upcoming questions in our mind are that how much knowledge of the context should be involved in writing, how much writing ability should students be equipped with and what approaches are effective in composing acceptable pieces of writing. In fact, whether or not students can meet writing demands totally depends on writing approaches.

Nonetheless, teaching writing approach, the core of the teaching of writing, is deemed to be inadequate to the writing demand in Vietnamese context. Luu Trong Tuan (2011: 1471) firmly states that the majority of writing teachers just concentrate on supplying students with vocabulary connected to the required topic and some questions to “help them shape ideas into the completed paragraphs”. The researcher acknowledges “Teaching writing in this way only benefits them to an extent that it can assist them in producing the error-free texts following the models of correct language. However, it does not contribute to helping students realize and master attributes such as purposes, audiences, context and linguistic conventions of text which are the important features of any text-types”. Hoang (2007) also reports that the Vietnamese common routine of instruction and practice is purely product-oriented approach through which students are required to read the given instruction, think

it over and write. As a matter of fact, towards product-oriented writing teaching in Vietnam, the evaluation is merely based on “language knowledge” according to “a set of conventions largely derived from samples or model of a certain genre” (Ly, 2007).

Genre-based instruction, Reformulation and Reconstruction

It is known that genre-based approach put the great emphasis on the relationship between text-genres and the context (Hyon, 1996) to help students effectively get involved in their academic and professional environment and the wider communities. Also, reconstruction and reformulation are deemed to be conducive as an immediate L2 input to enhance writing skills. If the reformulated text, the native-like text (recasted by teacher) is the centre of reformulation activity, the starting point here is the teacher’s text which learners first expose and then reconstruct. It is then used for “matching” with the original one. While in reformulation, a kind of top-down and task-based activity, students are exposed to interaction and cooperation, they are not necessarily required for comprehension and communicative activities through bottom-up processes in reconstruction (Marton, 1988; cited in Thornbury, 2007). To this aspect, Swain and Lapkin (1995; cited in Thornbury, 2007) judge that L2 learners with “extra effort” may also prompt L2 themselves by producing the target language and recognizing linguistic problems and other attention about their second language. Although different in nature, the two tasks are deemed to be promisingly applied in the study setting in search of expectant writing instructions for argumentative essays which are significantly taught in gifted high school context. Therefore, the study was conducted to answer the ensuing questions:

1. Do the students significantly outperform during the reformulation stage in terms of writing ability?
2. How do students perceive the effectiveness of the reformulation task stage?
 - i. To what extent do they have confidence in reformulation task construction?
 - ii. To what extent do they have anxiety over reformulation task instruction presented?

Methods

Participants

Thirty-three students (thirty school girls and three school boys) from class 11AV in Nguyen Quang Dieu Gifted High School, Dong Thap province are invited to take part in the study including one proficiency test OPT, one pretest, one posttest 1 and one posttest 2 after control time in phase 1 as well as experimental time in phase 2. These students were required to take two classes (90 minutes) per week for three months. In order to determine

whether they had improved in writing and understood their attitudes toward the teaching methods used, they were divided into three groups of high, medium, and low ability based on their writing pre-test scores to be observed systematically. One student whose writing pre-test scores differentiates from the others' was not included in the three groups mentioned.

Table 1: Group Attribution according to pretest scores

Group	N	Mean	Min	Max	Std. Dev
High Level	7	71.81	70.67	73.5	1.00
Middle Level	17	55.27	50.33	64.5	4.31
Low Level	8	33.90	27.33	45.5	6.29
Total	32	53.55	27.33	73.5	13.97

Materials

“Successful Writing –Upper-Intermediate” by Virginia Evans (1998) was used as the study textbook. The book is well-designed in terms of genre-based approach and communicative activities. However, students do not spend time dealing with all tasks in the book but selected sessions by the teacher to fit the school teaching curriculum and objectives.

Procedures

Each phase is conducted in four six weeks, with 90-minute weekly class per week for writing training. Students are required to take posttest 1 in week 6 and posttest 2 in week 11 then have some communicative activities on “real-genre” in week 12. In week 13, participants are asked to send feedback 2 and respond to a questionnaire on their perspectives on the treatment.

The tools used are students' written feedback, questionnaire and a collection of students' argumentative essays (pretest1, posttest1, posttest2 and in-class writing). Paired sample t-test will be used to compare the mean score of posttest1 & posttest2. Besides, the descriptive statistical will be used to evaluate students' attitudes towards the treatment (reformulation).

Findings

Question 1: Do the students significantly outperform during the reformulation stage in terms of writing ability?

The detailed analyses indicated that the student participants in this study have established a good level of control over the features of writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanic. However, different growth trends can be seen

among the three groups in terms of both the average scores and the speed. The low level students seemed to make lots of progress between posttest 1 and posttest 2 while middle level ones made a slight progress and high level ones made the slightest speed of progress.

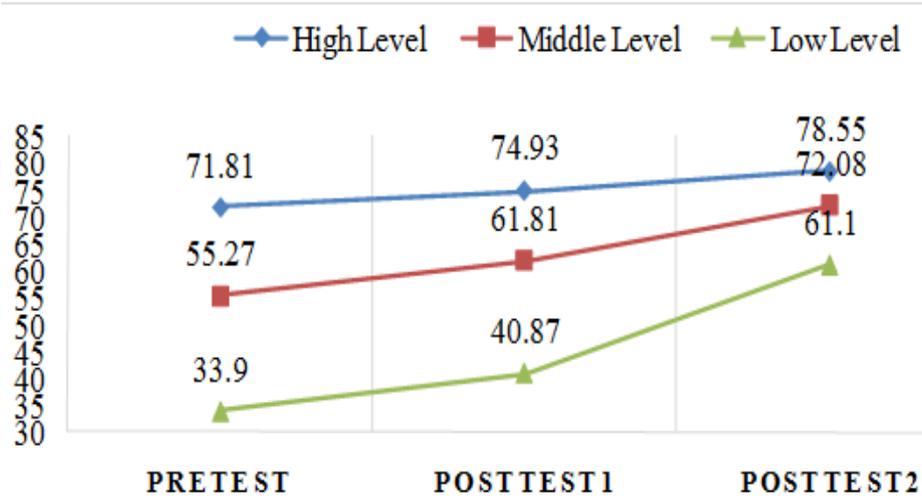


Figure 1: Comparison among three groups of ability

Besides, the data analysis reveals differentiated effects on writing attributes among the three groups. The improvements of students’ writing ability in terms of Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language use and Mechanics can be seen in the following charts.

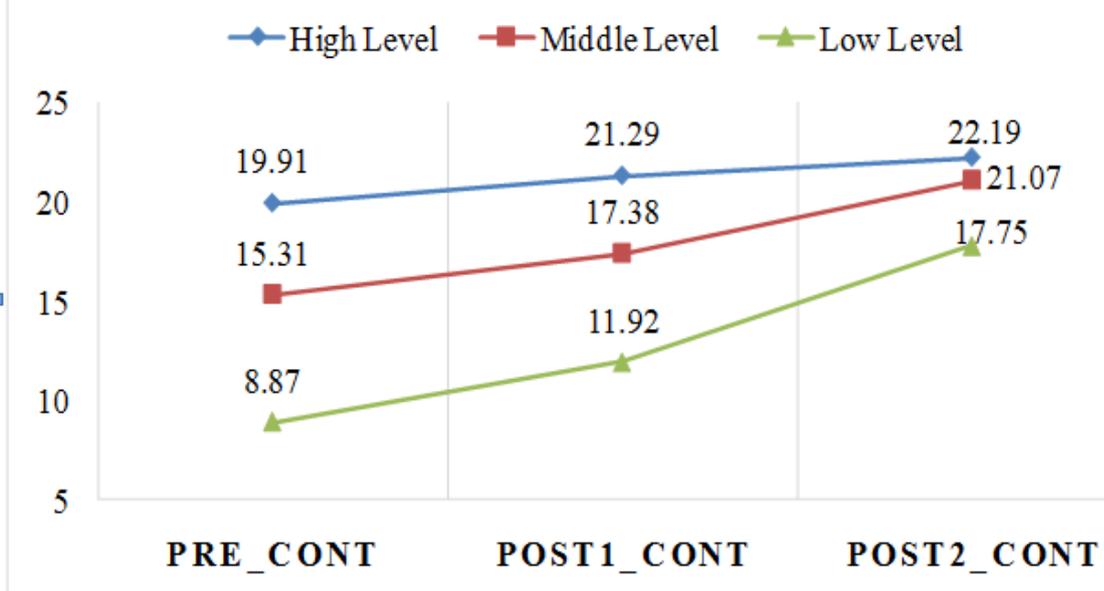


Figure 2: Improvements of Content in the study

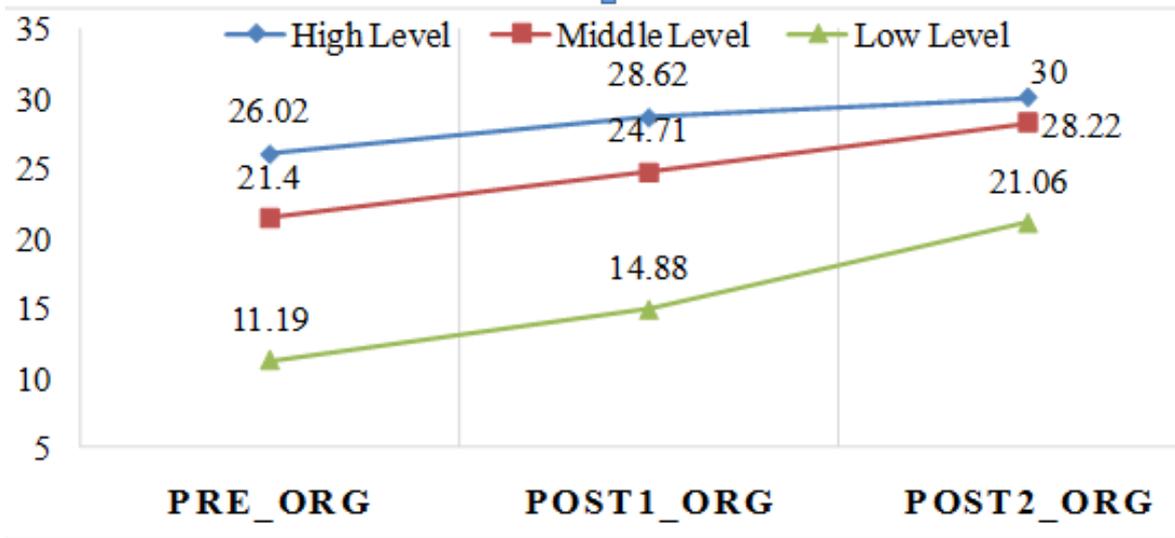


Figure 3: Improvements of Organization in the study

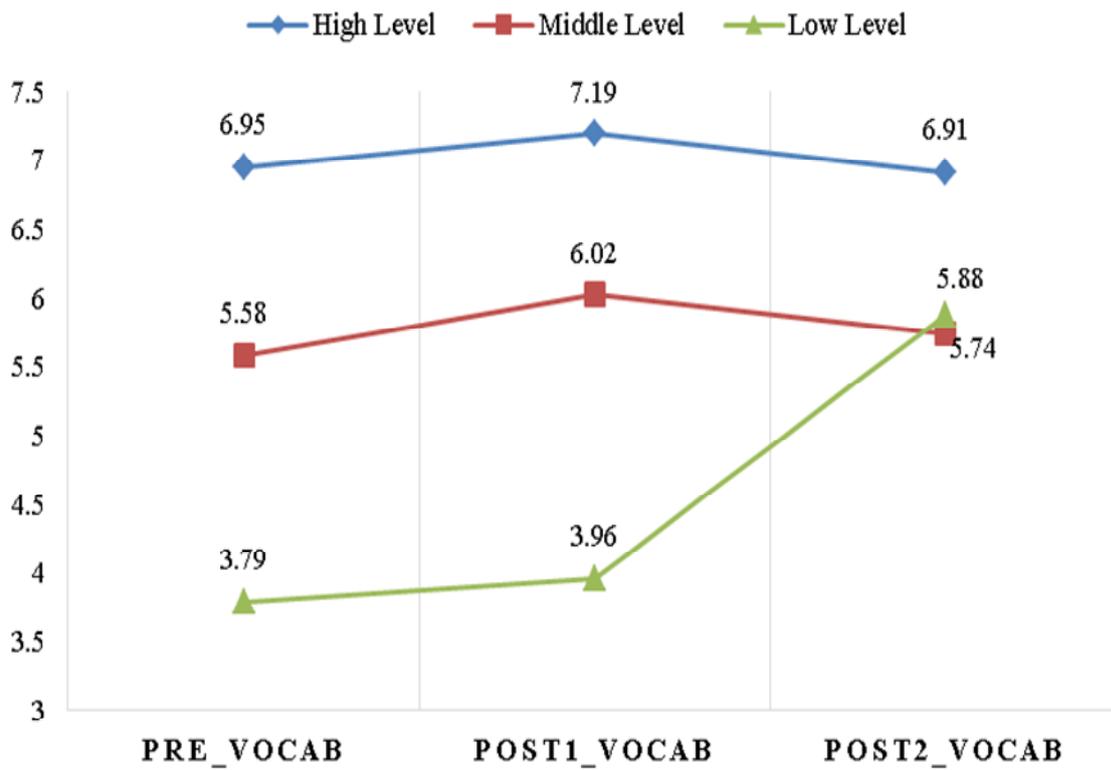


Figure 4: Improvements of Vocabulary in the study

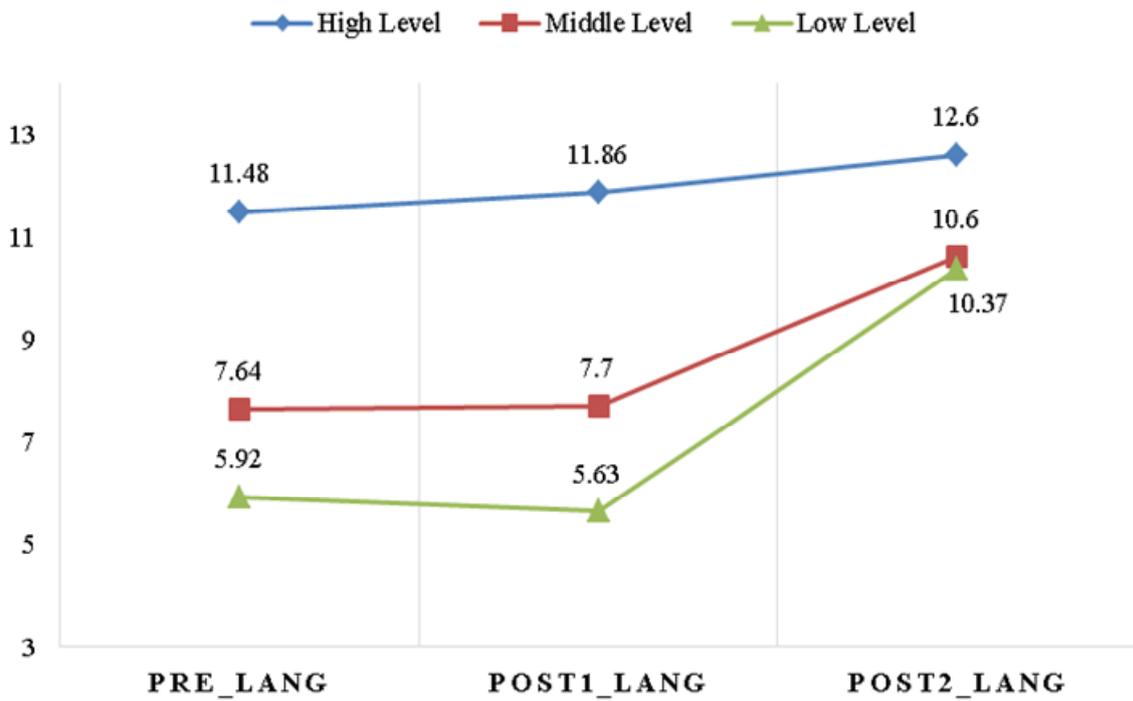


Figure 5: Improvements of Language Use

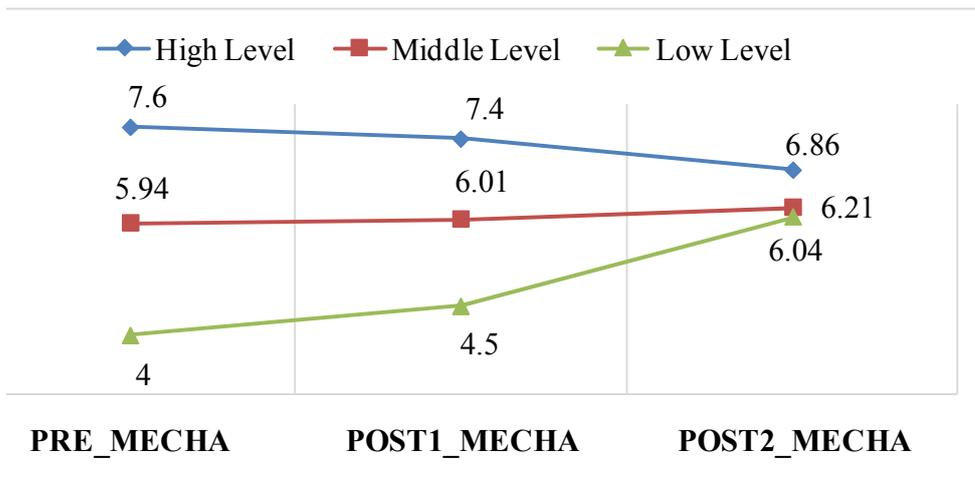


Figure 6: Improvements of Mechanics in the study

Question 2: How do students perceive the effectiveness of the reformulation task stage?

Table 2: Students' attitudes toward REC and REF

Opinion	N	Mean
1. I like the phase 1 of reconstruction	32	3.28
2. I like the phase 2 of reformulation		4.13
3. I have confidence in reconstructin		3.34
4. I have confidence in reformulation		3.75
5. I have anxiety over reconstruction		3.06
6. I have anxiety over reformulation		3.56

Students preferred reformulation for some reasons. Pictures are used in context exploration and some kinds of tasks like True/ False, Matching, Ordering are used to explore the context and writing rules instead of questions in reconstruction. Also, students find it interesting to explore the writing model by themselves so that they will remember the rules easier. Similarly, the fact that students are required to systematize writing rules at the end of the lesson leads to students' memorisation.

Students' response also indicates that students' priority is REF for some reasons. They thought that REF offers good chances to release the ideas without any intervention of reading a model sample. Students have to write twice, which helps them create a good final version after making a comparison between their first draft and the reformulated version. The majority of the participants (twenty-eight out of thirty-two) regard REF as good writing instructions for gifted high school students. However, it is suggested that a combination between REC and REF be important in low level students who need focusing on the organization prior to idea development.

Conclusion

This study is limited in scope. The number of teachers and students participating was relatively small. It would, therefore, be absurd to assume that the views of the students recorded above represent the full potential of all gifted students in similar gifted high school. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from the findings may be relevant to other contexts. The fact that students' improvements in experimental time might be influenced by the control time might be taken into consideration in another study to consolidate the research findings.

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A CASE STUDY ON LEARNER ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN OUT-OF-CLASS LEARNING

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Abstract

In response to the current international trend of making use of technology as a solution for developing countries to boost their English language learning and teaching, University of Language and International Studies (ULIS) has launched a project in which Vietnam National University (VNU) undergraduates heading for B1 (CEFR) can do online practices at home under their class instructor's supervision. In this paper, I will present my personal record on the participating time, completing amount, perceived benefits and reported difficulties of a group of VNU University of Engineering and Technology students. The study then suggests on curriculum adaptation, course organisation and teacher preparation for more motivating computer-assisted out-of-school activities.

Keywords: technology, self-study, out-of-class learning.

Introduction

In the shift of focus from teaching to learning in second language education, technology is regarded as a crucial force to boost learners' autonomy. The educational potential of technology in second language pedagogy has been highly emphasized by researchers like Benson (2011), Hafner (2014) and Lai & Gu (2011). Its transformative role is also realized in the National Foreign Language project 2020.

In an effort to investing this "important learning space in the ecology of learning" (Lai & Gu, 2011, p. 320), ULIS have launched a B1 online course for VNU students this academic year. Taking this programme, students have chances to practice listening, reading, speaking and writing skills as well as vocabulary and grammar exercises.

To investigate the non-English major student response to the programme of practising English online launched by ULIS, this study focuses on answering the questions below:

1. Are students of technology majors willing to take the free online course for English practice? Why and why not?
2. What are student perceived benefits of using technology for English self-study?
3. What are student perceived effectiveness and difficulties in using technology for learning English?

Research design

A questionnaire was administered to students of University of Technology and Engineering – VNU in week 10 of their academic schedule (N = 272, 239 male, 33 female). Over half of them are freshmen; 29% are second year students. This questionnaire consists of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions asking students about demographics (gender, year of study), their intention to take the online course, their perceived advantages, effectiveness and difficulties of online practice.

Learners' perceptions were triangulated with the information from semi-structured phone interviews with the administrator and 8 teachers supervising the course takers. These interviews focus mainly on teacher perceptions and their marketing the course to the students.

Qualitative data were coded on the basis of the research questions.

Findings

1. Are the students of technology majors willing to take the free online course for English practice? Why and why not?

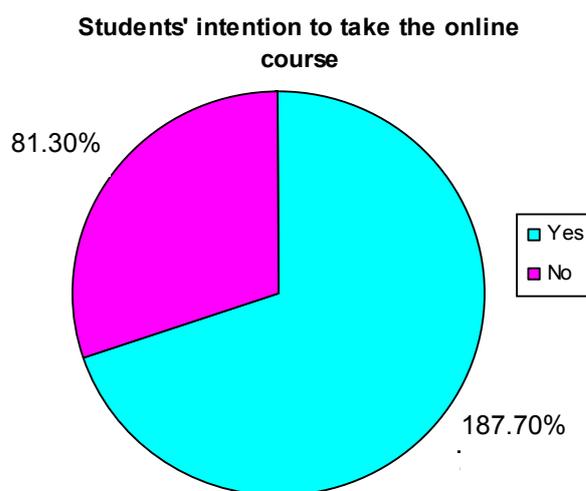


Figure 1: Students' willingness to take the B1 online practice course

Nearly one third of the students hesitate to register for the course. Objectively, they “have no information about the course” and “no idea of the programme.” All the teachers confirmed that they themselves have little information of the course. The administrator said he was waiting for the group leader to send him he list of registered students. The group leader was said to quit the programme.

Other objective reasons are lack of time or adequate feedback. Some say “my schedule is almost full. I have more important subjects to complete.” Others doubt the role of technology in giving feedback, preferring more detailed feedback and other ways to learn.

Subjective reasons are related to learner language proficiency and self-study skills. Some students believe that their “English level is too low for the course,” and that they “cannot study effectively in the classroom let alone on the Internet” since they are “not self-disciplined or hardworking enough.”

Still, about two third of the students show their willingness to join the course. They “are used to and prefer technology-assisted learning” as they can “manage their time more easily” and “learn anywhere at anytime.” The convenience of this learning method also goes with the interactive and responsive environment. That is, they can “learn with their friends” and “help one another, share materials and receive just-in-time feedback from the systems, peers and teachers.” The rich resources of materials like “dictionaries,” “test banks” and “listening tasks” save them time, and thus help them “manage their study in a more proactive and comfortable manner.” These resources are regarded as “convenient, interesting, lively and comprehensible;” “personal interaction and authentic materials” help them “avoid boredom” and “are more motivating;” as a result, they are “inspired to learn more.” Finally, some trust the effectiveness of the programme, believing that they can “practice more skills, such as reading and listening” with authentic and standard input, and “enrich their vocabulary and grammar.”

2. What are student perceived benefits of using technology for English self-study?

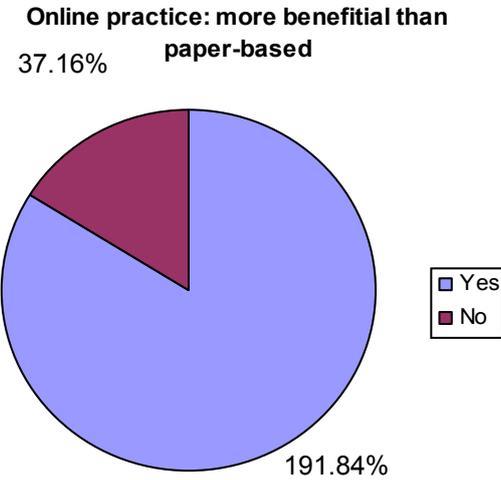


Figure 2: Student perceived benefits of online- versus paper-based practice

About eight out of ten students agree that online-practice is more beneficial for them in compared with traditional one. Only a minority of students who prefer doing practice on paper provide focus mainly on the sustainability of the experience and learning skills. For

them, doing paper-based exercises, they “can remember them longer.” In general, benefits from technology use in English learning are seen by most students, too.

Table 1: Students’ agreement in increased confidence as a result of using technology

	Increased levels of confidence in				
	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Lexico-Grammar
Completely agree	15%	24%	17%	15%	14%
Agree	51%	62%	58%	55%	60%
Disagree	20%	3%	14%	17%	11%
Completely disagree	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%

All the macro skills and language knowledge are expected to develop as a result of using technology for out-of-class learning. Almost nine out of ten students agree that their listening skills are the most likely to be improved as a result of technology use for English self-study (means: 1.8, standard deviation: 0.6). Some students write “now I can do the listening tasks after listening to the text only once or twice, instead of for several times as I used to” and that they “can listen to exchanges in films.”

Though productive skills are not believed to improve much, a number of students mention their improvement in pronunciation. Some write “I can pronounce more accurately” and “become more confident to communicate in English.”

Improvement in vocabulary is also realised by most of the students. A student reports that “from knowing nothing, after practice again and again I could remember more new words in daily communication.”

3. What are student perceived effectiveness and difficulties in using technology for learning English?

Students’ perceived effectiveness of their use of technology to study English

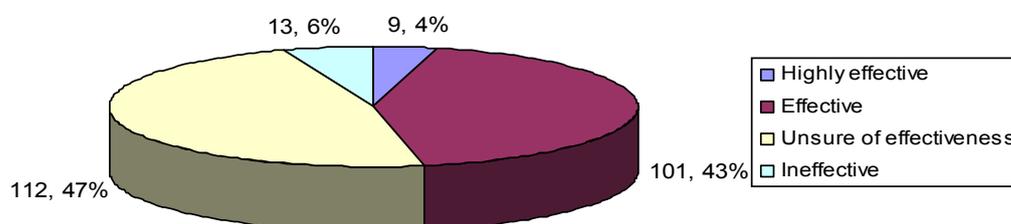


Figure 3: Students’ perceived effectiveness of their technology use for learning English

The students are divided quite equally in judging the effectiveness of using technology in learning English by themselves. Those who agree on the efficiency of technology in English learning base their judgment on their language improvement and increased motivation. Their “improved communicative skills” and “increased language levels from all aspects” include “developed vocabulary, listening and writing skills and grammar”; “competent listening and writing skills”, and “sharpened listening and speaking skills”.

As to motivation, a number of students can raise their interest in learning English. In compared with traditional ways, technology helps learners “find learning English more interesting,” “more appealing thanks to the authenticity,” and “more frequent in use as a result of the communicative environment at hand.” For example, a student writes “whenever I have some free time like on the bus, during lunch break, I can use my laptop or mobile phone to learn English.” However, for others the root of effectiveness lies in their learning methods as technology is no more than a tool for them.

On the other hand, over half of the students state that they do not use technology to study English effectively due to the distractive learning environment, their poor learning strategies, and their low language proficiency as well as the lack of support from the teacher.

Table 2: Sources of difficulties

	Inappropriate materials	Lack of time	Lack of Instruction	Lack of internet access	Lack of peer learning
Completely agree	6%	7%	11%	3%	11%
Agree	36%	36%	47%	31%	46%
Disagree	39%	38%	24%	42%	25%
Completely disagree	5%	7%	4%	9%	6%

The students are divided in opinions on difficulties in using technology in terms of time and materials. Over half of them agree on the lack of instruction and peer learning as main sources of difficulties. Half of them disagree that difficulties lie in their lack of internet access.

Discussion

Most of the students who are eager to join the programme are mainly first- and second-year students who sense the necessity of achieving the level of English proficiency required for graduation (Yoon, 2008, p. 44). As the student major is technology, their learning styles, experiences and comfort with technology is an expected source of

motivation to welcome the innovation (Dugas, 2005; Pollara & Kee Broussard, 2011). Above all, proactive attitudes towards seeking learning opportunities beyond the classroom are the determination of their sustainable technology use for English learning (Lai & Gu, 2011, p. 327; Kormos & Csizer, 2014, p. 292). This is a much more important indicator of learner commitment to the course than the beliefs in the use of technology as a boredom-avoidance tool (Kormos & Csizer, 2014, p. 292). Similarly, though a considerable number of students mention lack of time as an excuse for their ignorance to the programme, the effective time of technology use is not a key factor (Kormos & Csizer, 2014).

Nevertheless, learner willingness for trying the innovation may be considerably hindered by the lack of information and guidance. Whether joining the course or not, students expect to gain most benefits in receptive skills as a result of using technology. This further emphasises Fuchs et al.'s (2013) advice to consider technology to support rather than replace face-to-face communication (p. 163).

Conclusion

The majority of students' eagerness to join the online course is a cheerful signal of its responsiveness to learner needs. Still, learner limited access to the information and training has hindered some from confidence in trying the course. This may in turn negatively affect their use of technology in self-regulated language learning (Hockly, 2014, p. 83). Thus, to encourage the proactive attitudes among a higher number of learners, it is essential to increase information exchange and communication between stake holders, provide guidance for students in self-study skills, and build learning communities via the Internet.

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SUB-THEME

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

USING ONLINE PEER FEEDBACK IN WRITING CLASS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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Abstract

With the popularity of applying technology in learning and teaching, online peer feedback has recently become common in university writing classes. This paper studies some difficulties that EFL students at Quang Binh University encounter in practicing and correcting their writings. Then it reports the results of our action research on designing and applying an online peer feedback checklist to use in writing classes. Based on the survey, analyses of the students' final writing versions collected and a follow-up questionnaire, the study shows that using online peer feedback checklists enhances the opportunities of co-operation among the learners, encourages them to give more critical comments on peers' writings, and enforces students' self study. Some useful recommendations in using online peer feedback checklist and giving comments, corrections, etc. are also given to maximize the effect of online peer feedback.

Keywords: writing skill, online peer feedback, action research.

Introduction

The reality of teaching English writing at QBU reveals that English-major students have some problems with their academic writing. Students also seem to have a lack of confidence and motivation for their writing. Moreover, the quality of their writing pieces isn't good enough. Little cooperation in learning among students could be one of the reasons for this problem. For each university class, students have three periods of writing each week. On average, the students are required to hand in three or four essays for the whole course. This amount of practice is not adequate for English-major students to develop their writing ability thoroughly. They don't have much time to exchange ideas or essays with their friends. All of their feedback comes mainly from the teachers and rarely

from their peers. Therefore, it was noticed that there is a greater need for more direct writing feedback for students.

Peer feedback activities can be applied in EFL writing classes to solve the addressed problems (Langan & Wheeler, 2003; Trahasch, 2004; Coulthard, et al., 2007). Peer feedback is a type of collaborative learning in which students learn to analyze and give constructive feedback on their peers' written texts (Trahasch, 2004).

Peer feedback has proved to have a positive impact on learners' English writing ability and their motivation in learning to write. Having students give feedback to one another on their papers can have many advantages: the students get opportunities to develop their ability to give constructive feedback, it provides students with more chances to receive direct feedback on their writing, and it allows students to be supported through the process of writing a first draft, editing, and submitting a final paper. These days, thanks to the development of technology, peer feedback activities can also be carried out online.

Online peer feedback

Internet technology is now being widely applied in the field of education to enhance the professional development of instructors (Duran, Brunvand, & Fossum, 2009) or promote learning and the development of skills (Allsop, 2011). Indeed, online peer feedback has a great potential to increase the quality of students' learning process (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Online peer feedback is an instructional strategy aiming to foster interaction among students which is expected to contribute to improving the quality of written assignments as well as enhancing their motivation in learning to write in English. Learners exchange writing drafts, suggest corrections and give feedback and comments in an online environment with the support of an internet system. Because writing is a long process, feedback is treated as a formative assessment (Huynh & Trinh, 2007).

To make it an easy and friendly learning environment, teachers can choose some very popular and simple tools to create online peer feedback activities. Online portfolios, Edmodo.com, Gnomio.com, and Moodle are examples of valuable educational social networking sites for teachers and students to do this.

Action Research Component: Online Peer Feedback

Context

The teacher, an English Language Fellow lecturer at Quang Binh University, held the action research in a 4th year Business Communication Class. The class consisted of 10 English major students who had already completed one year of Business Communication. The students in the class perform at or above a B2 level according to the CEFR scale.

Research Focus

The main goal of the research was to create a supportive writing community for the students in which they could rely on each other as well as the teacher to improve their writing skills. The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent can online peer writing feedback help students to edit and improve upon a first draft?
2. How can online peer writing feedback provide students a chance to clarify their focus with their writing as well as encourage more ideas for their peers?
3. What are some perceived benefits and challenges to online peer feedback according to the students?

The steps of the action research project included identifying the problem (lack of writing feedback for students), thinking of a solution (online peer feedback), implementing the assignment, evaluating the results, and creating modifications to improve the next implementation of the project.

Procedure

First, the lecturer assigned a pros and cons essay related to a current events topic, the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. The class was to research the topic at home, and a group brainstorm of pros and cons was done in class to help provide vocabulary and reinforce ideas. Next, the students were assigned to complete a first draft of their pros and cons essay and post it on the educational social networking site, Edmodo.com. After all the drafts were posted and checked off by the teacher, the students were asked to read two of their peers' essays and leave a comment in which they would answer the following questions:

1. Does the student clearly summarize what TPP is?
2. Does the student mention at least two pros and two cons?
3. Does the student provide evidence or examples for each pro and con?
4. Does the student wrap up the topic at the end?
5. Say one thing you like about the student's essay.
6. Please give one suggestion to improve the essay.

Finally, the students took into account the suggestions of their classmates to write a final essay and handed it in to the teacher.

After the full assignment had been finished, the teacher provided a questionnaire to the students regarding their experience with online peer feedback. The questionnaire was completed in class.

The Findings

Since the peer feedback exercise was focused purely on content, it helped students clarify their ideas and add more reasons and examples to their essays. You can see how students guided each other with this answer to feedback question #5: “I like the way you explain the reason why Vietnam will face competition in the domestic market from 11 other TPP countries. However, if you give clearly evidence, it will be perfect.” With feedback like this, students were kept on track to complete the assignment requirements and they were also challenged to add more ideas.

Not only did the feedback help students make sure they had met the requirements of the assignment, but reading their peers’ essays helped give students more ideas, vocabulary, and information to add to their own essays. This in fact proved to be a challenge of the action research project. Because all of the essays covered the same topics and students read their peers’ ideas, there tended to be a lot of replication of ideas among the essays. Next time, I would assign a topic that can be more diverse and lead to more variety in essay content.

As for the students’ feelings about the peer feedback exercise, they were neutral to positive, as shown in the questionnaire results. The questionnaire included a Likert scale analysis (1 ranked as strongly disagree and 5 ranked as strongly agree) of the following questions:

1. Overall, the peer feedback process helped me to improve my essay.
2. The peer feedback process helped me think of more ideas to add to my essay.
3. The peer feedback process helped me feel more confident about my writing.
4. The feedback I provided to my peers was helpful.
5. My peers gave me helpful suggestions.

No one felt negative overall about the project – 40% felt neutral about it, while 60% agreed that it was helpful. 20% of the students felt that the process didn’t help them think of more ideas for their essays, but this could be because we had already brainstormed many ideas as a pre-writing exercise. 20% disagreed that they felt more confident about their writing, but the remaining 40% felt neutral to positive about improving confidence. Question #4 had the most neutral responses, with 80% of students feeling ambivalent about how helpful their own advice was for other students. I could attribute this to not spending enough class time looking at multiple examples of constructive feedback. Next time, I would spend more time clarifying what helpful feedback consists of. 60% of students felt their peers gave helpful suggestions, and none disagreed with this statement, so I see this as a positive result.

For the second part of the questionnaire, I asked for short answer responses to the following questions:

1. What was helpful about the peer feedback process?
2. What was challenging about the process?

Some quotes that stood out about the positives of the process included, “Her feedback helped me feel more confident about writing”, “I like the feedback that I need [to] add some more practical examples for each pro and con,” and “the peer feedback... give me ideas to make my essay more interesting and shows me what is good about my essay.” As you can see from student responses, the students felt a boost in confidence in addition to receiving support with making their essays more focused and interesting.

Some comments particularly demonstrated the challenges of the process. One student said, “Some of my peers gave difficult words in their essays. It’s hard for me to understand clearly their ideas.” Another stated, “Some parts weren’t well-organized. It’s difficult to get to know their idea and give feedback for them.” As you can see, students’ greatest challenge was to understand their peers’ writing, either because the vocabulary was too advanced or the organization wasn’t clear for them. Next time, the teacher will emphasize for students that a lot of the problems they encounter in other students’ writing may also be present in their own writing, so they can use the process as an opportunity for self reflection. As for vocabulary, they can take the peer feedback process as a chance to learn new words.

Implications and conclusion

From this project, the authors found that an online peer feedback assignment can be successfully carried out at Quang Binh University, especially with the help of the Edmodo social networking site. Overall, the peer feedback project provided students a chance to receive more feedback than they are usually able to, and also look with a critical eye at their peers’ writing to see what kinds of common mistakes might be occurring. The authors hope that similar peer feedback assignments can be carried out in other writing classes for English majors at Quang Binh University.

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USING BLOGGING TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO PRACTICE WRITING SKILL

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Abstract

Writing is viewed hugely important, yet it is a daunting task for both teachers and learners of English as a second language (ESL). Nowadays, the internet has emerged as a prominently new technology and played an important role in learning and teaching English in Vietnam. Technology has proved to bring a lot of benefits in learning a foreign language and the use of technology helps teachers and students in different ways. In view of this, the researcher shows an interest in looking into the possibilities of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools for language teaching and learning and Blog is known as an effective method in ESL classrooms. The aim of this paper is to apply blogs in developing the writing skills of ESL learners. The study will further highlight the benefits of weblogs logging activities and the impacts of these activities on students' motivation to write in English as autonomous learners.

Keywords: writing skill, technology, ICT, blog.

Introduction

Nowadays, the internet has emerged as a prominently new technology and played an important role in learning and teaching English in Vietnam. "Technology gives students opportunities to use their productive and receptive ability for real purposes, such as publishing a new letter or writing interactive journals" ("school computing", e-book). Facebook, Twitter, Google, Zing me or Weblog, etc are social networks applied as means of technology in order to support students in learning English.

The term "blog" is a contraction of two words: web and log. Blog is known as a tool for written communication and interaction. Blogs are personal online journals which have recently become a collaborative technology, regarded as a new way for people to express their thoughts in public. Most blog writers (bloggers) use this environment, as writing in blogs to help people become more thoughtful and critical in their writing. Blogs can also be used to publish and exchange personal knowledge. The idea of using blogs in language learning is similar to the use of journal writing which is a way to help students explore and assimilate new ideas, create links between the familiar and unfamiliar, mull over possibilities, and explain them to others. Blogs, therefore, should be used to promote writing skill among ESL learners.

In fact, while teaching English writing to the first year students at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2, I saw that many students did not like writing because they were not motivated in writing class. Besides, many of my colleagues said that it was too difficult for their students to take part in writing class enthusiastically. As a teacher, I found that through the reviewed benefits of blogging to teaching and learning writing, applying blog in writing class may help to solve these problems and improve the students' attitude towards writing.

Base on the rationales above the researcher formulated the research question: *How can blogs motivate the first year students at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 in writing skill?*

Benefits of using blog

There were lots of benefits and advantages cited by the lecturers during the interviews when blogs are used with their students. As indicated by one of the interviewees, blogs can help to seal the connection between the students and the lecturer. In addition, blogs help to gain free interaction so it's more informal, and there are no language barriers while learners write their blog. Students generally find weblog writing valuable for language learning. Learners at college level found writing weblogs a motivating activity as they were able to experience authentic writing in context (Brooks et al., 2004; Laitner, 2007), help create a collaborative class environment where learners can give and receive feedback (Barrios, 2003; Kavaliauskiene' et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2003, Laitner, 2007; Minugh, 2008; Tan et al., 2005b) and present learners with space to reflect on their language learning (Mynard, 2007). Learners can also see for themselves how their writing has progressed over time through the use of weblogs (Johnson, 2004).

The use of weblogs in education enables students to make choices and take ownership of not only their weblog space but also their learning process (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004; Davis, 2006, 2008; Tan et al., 2005a; Ward 2004). This empowers the students by letting them take control of how they learn.

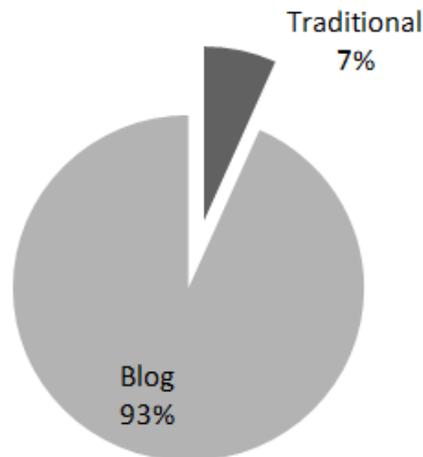
Methodology and findings

Methodology

To find out the effects of blogging on the students' writing skill, the researcher applied survey questionnaire and interview with thirty students of English major at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2. All of the first year students are at intermediate level and have basic knowledge of writing. Besides, blog comment was used as a good choice in data analysis procedure. Blog comments were collected, classified and then analyzed to evaluate the student's attitudes towards the use of blog in writing skill.

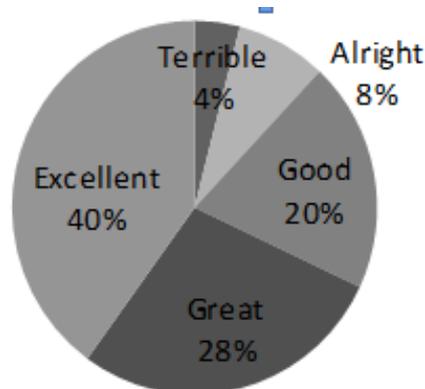
Findings

Chart 1: The method which the students like better: traditional writing (paper/ pencil) or blog



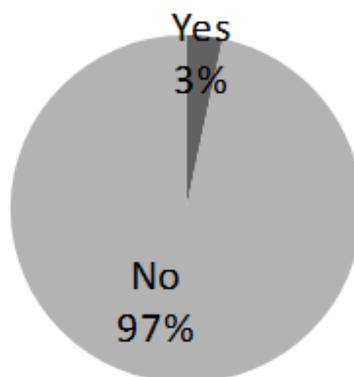
The pie chart shows the method which the students like better: traditional (paper/ pencil) or blog. The majority of the students revealed that they prefer blog to traditional (paper/ pencil), the pie chart shows that 28 students, which accounted for 93%, like applying blog in writing while 2 students (7%) chose using traditional method with paper and pencil. The pie chart displays that blog was preferred to traditional (paper/ pencil) way.

Chart 2: What is your opinion of using blog in writing?



The pie chart shows what the students thought of using blog in writing. It can be clearly seen that only one student (4%) did not like using blog while 10 students (40%) really and really loved this new technology. 7 students (28%) said that they loved doing blog, 5 students (20%) answered “good” and 2 students answered “alright”. The pie chart shows that there are 29 students out of 30 students preferring blog. It means that blog is useful to motivate students in writing class.

Chart 3: Did you enjoy using online peer feedback to complete writing papers



The pie chart indicates that the students mainly enjoy using online peer feedback to complete writing papers. 29 students (taking up 97%) liked using online peer feedback and 1 student (accounting for 3%) did not like online peer feedback.

From the pie chart, the majority of the students used blog because they wanted to apply high technology in improving writing skills. Only one student investigated answered that she did not like it for many reasons.

Discussion

The current study corroborates the findings of other studies that blogging helps facilitate the development of students' writing skills. With more than eight weeks of training students to write paragraphs through blogging, the students' writing improved particularly in content and organization. Although there are other factors that may come into play that could have orchestrated their writing improvements like instruction, motivation, and self-efficacy which were not covered by the study, we can't also deny the fact that blogging has contributed to the development of students' writing skills. Results of students' interviews and questionnaires proved that the students themselves perceived that blogging honed their writing skills through reading and commenting on their peers' paragraphs since the students had access to their peers' paragraphs. Likewise, they also enjoyed reading peers' content, style, structure, flow and organization.

However, language teachers, particularly writing teachers, should first train the students in analyzing paragraphs through workshops prior to peer editing so that they can readily spot flaws in a piece of writing during the actual peer review. Furthermore, with intensive training on critiquing paragraphs, they will not only be able to understand what to avoid in writing but also what basic tips to apply in writing academic papers effectively. With the facilitative effects of blogging on students' writing competence, language teachers, therefore, may introduce blogging as a platform for students' writing of essays online. In that way, students will find writing enjoyable and fun because aside from the satisfaction they may feel for having a wide readership, it will also boost their confidence in their

writing abilities. The study showed that frequent blogging on random topics hones writing skills, which in effect, enable the learners to take pride in their writing achievements, thus, developing their self-esteem.

We can't also discount the importance of direct instruction in developing students' writing skills. Since the findings of the study show that students find text organization as their topmost difficulty, language teachers, therefore, should intensify the use of cohesive devices in their instruction so that students can readily use appropriate transition markers in their paragraphs.

Finally, a follow up study can also be conducted to delineate the effects of blogging, instruction, and peer feedback on the development of students' writing skills using multiple regression analysis.

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APPLICATION OF ONLINE TESTING IN ENGLISH SUBJECTS AT A VOCATIONAL COLLEGE IN VIETNAM: REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

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Abstract

In response to the requirements of reforms in education and shifts in teaching and assessment, many strategies and regulations at institutional, ministerial and governmental levels have recently been developed. Extensive efforts have been made by vocational colleges, teachers and learners in applying online testing. This research aims to examine the effectiveness of online testing in English subjects and challenges of teachers and students in an online testing of English at a vocational college. Questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of online testing and interviews of teachers and learners are employed to have a deep understanding of their challenges and tensions in the shift from traditional testing to the online one. The current research findings discuss how reforms in testing should be carried out with some recommendations. This finding can be used as a reference to an online testing application for other colleges.

Introduction

Online training and learning environment has been developed to deliver courses worldwide with the help of websites, electronic textbooks, whiteboards, forums, and emails for groups' discussion, or even asynchronous and synchronous conversation through electronic lecture materials. Moreover, student's access to the digital world has motivated educators to change teaching methods, interaction responsiveness, and assessment approaches (cited in Bartley, 2006).

However, the tendency towards technology in education in Vietnam is still weak in comparison to fast speed of the world digital utility (Pham, 2006). In response to the requirements of reforms in education and shifts in teaching and assessment, many strategies and regulations at institutional, ministerial and governmental levels have recently been released. Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued policies on technology adoption into education to improve the quality of teaching and learning and even assessment. In 2008, the MOET emphasized the deployment of ICT in education to be considered as "the most effective teaching tool." With that purpose, teaching staff is recruited with the obligation to be examined in IT tests and encouragement to implement and develop ICT effectively in training and assessment (MOET, 2011).

Instant efforts have been made by vocational colleges, teachers, and learners in applying online testing. This research aims to examine the effectiveness of online testing of English and challenges of teachers and students in an online testing of English at a vocational college. Questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of online testing and interviews of teachers and learners are employed to have a deep understanding of their challenges and tensions in the shift from traditional testing to the online one.

Application of Online Assessment

To promote teaching and learning's quality, to encourage technology application in education, Department of Assessment and Quality Assurance (DAQA) (2011) applied "Testpro" and "Testpro for English" software as the online assessment tools for the final examinations at the College. This change also aimed to reduce the overload of the administration work. The DAQA has the plan to integrate the online assessment program with training management software namely Intelligence University (IU) in the College portal. Since Online assessments can only pose particular types of questions (multiple choice questions) to students, the online examinations are applied to some general subjects such as English, Information Technology and some certain technical ones (Department of Assessment and Quality Assurance, 2012).

Effectiveness of online testing

The transition to online assessment has brought new levels of efficiency: cost – saving, labour-saving, instant results and analysis, and data storage capacity. Bunderson, Inouye & Olsen (1988) admitted that online administration may be beneficial in improving test security; a reduction in coding, scoring, and associated measurement errors; increased data storage; and immediate score reporting (*ibid.*, 1988).

The advance of technology has resulted in various improvements in education and assessment at this College. According to the research participants, one of the primary benefits using online assessment is that assessment results can be automatically processed and calculated by the computer. The findings from student questionnaires and teacher interviews show online testing is beneficial for students because it has an opportunity to receive immediate results, or to provide instant information about students' level in the subject. As a result, students can identify their capacity quickly where they have been in their learning (Teacher interview).

Teachers at interviews explain that traditional assessment seems less effective than the online one as the former takes time and money to design, administer and grade. Thanks to the testing software, examinations can be adjusted, edited and published instantly. Testing question bank is usable and updated after each exam. Therefore, the application of online technology can reduce long-term costs.

Challenges for applying online testing

To perform an online testing, teachers, students and administrators address some key challenges that they have faced in the large scale. In this section, facilities to operate the system, Internet bandwidth, and students' awareness of cheating are major concerns.

Applying technology in testing is one of the key challenges of online testing due to the availability of computers and other hardware for students to use during online assessments. In fact, the situation of more than 1,000 students taking an exam at the same time has posed questions to the management board since the current equipment cannot meet the demand of the large-scale online testing. This is an issue driven by both technical facilities and finance. As a result, that exam has been divided into 12 shifts per day (1hour per shift) from 7.30 in the morning to 19.30 that day (Exam schedule, Teachers). The tension to operate such an exam and maintain the facilities after each shift is noticeable. Teachers as proctors have to work overtime during exam time. Moreover, due to the overloaded schedule, computers tend to freeze during testing, which affects students' psychology, and results revealed in the findings. Therefore, it is necessary that more investment in technology should be made to solve problems properly.

Another challenge that most online test takers may encounter is the unstable Internet bandwidth. In contrast to traditional examinations, online testing requires sufficient, reliable Internet bandwidth (Massachusetts Educational Technology Advisory Council, 2011). Students agree that the Internet system of the College has much affected their testing (students' questionnaire). Interrupting the test is supposed to happen occasionally due to the weak and unstable system. The administrators shared their experience in monitoring an online test that students, in that case, have to stop their testing and wait for system reoperation to continue or repeat their test while some are arranged to retake the exam at the different time. Moreover, the test website may be slow with the high traffic of Internet usage. That frozen or slow speed issue is the disadvantage for students with anxiety about their computer ability compared to those students who are confident with technology. Measures must be taken to ensure that the assessments are fair (Whittington, 1999).

The data reveal some students admit to cheating on online tests at times. In spite of the examiners' presence in testing rooms, they still steal some testing time to search for answers to the tests (STs). The explanation is the teachers' ignorance and limited ability to control students' computers in exam rooms. Some teachers indicate that they are not able to operate and control the online system and test security at the same time. In comparison with a traditional examination, examiners at the online ones are supposed to be equipped with a certain level of technology. On account of overlapping schedules of teaching and exam shifts, some teachers with limited technology are employed as exam controllers.

Therefore, online cheating may be caused by the loosened assessment security. High-tech cheating such as using multiple hidden windows and handheld devices (i.e. USB) can provide students with unauthorized materials.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the application of online testing and its effectiveness and challenges at the College. Despite such challenges, online testing is still encouraged to apply widely for other subjects. Within the limited time and space, this paper cannot investigate in details and present all data collected. Therefore, further research should examine feasible solutions and effective practice of online testing.

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USING PPT IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

PowerPoint (PP) is now widely used in high schools to support teaching and learning English. Research has proven that effective PP slides improve teaching and foster better interactions in classrooms, creating more in-depth learning. Recent research, however, reported that students' learning might be negatively affected by the use of PP. This study investigates the benefits and drawbacks of PP lessons in L2 classrooms from students' perspectives. Data were collected from four high schools in An Giang (AG) Province in 2014. Participants in the study (N=318) were grade-eleven students (SS) and were asked to determine the advantages and disadvantages of PP used to teach lessons in English classrooms. The results showed that over 60% of the participating students perceived lectures given using PP are better than those are not. Moreover, SS' responses to the questionnaires indicated that the prominent benefits of the use of PP related to visual effects which engaged SS in a deeper understanding of the topics. On the other hand, the drawbacks of PP mainly are the text-heavy slides, the overuse of special effects and the fast delivery of lectures. Finally, suggestions to minimize the negative effects of PP on English lessons were discussed.

Keywords: powerpoint, powerpoint presentation, benefits, drawbacks.

Introduction

The use of PP in English teaching and learning is getting more popular in most secondary schools. Despite its benefits, its drawbacks make it a controversial issue for many educators. Thus, this mini survey looks into the advantages and disadvantages of PP presentations from the SS' perspectives in four schools in AG province in order to provide some solutions for the effective use of PP presentations in EFL teaching. In this study, the researcher attempts to find out the answers for the following questions:

1. Do high school SS in AG province prefer PP presentations in instruction over traditional talk-and-chalk- instruction in EFL learning?
2. From the SS' perspective, which are the most preferred benefits and which are the worst suggested effects of using PP in EFL teaching?

Literature Review

Microsoft PP, developed by Microsoft in 1987, is used to create materials to present with a projector to produce a professional-looking presentation. The Faculty New Media Center (2000) has shown some striking characteristics of PP software such as animation, hyperlinks, and integration of movies or audio clips. Additionally, it is widely used because of its aesthetic value such as the use of exotic colors and designs, numerous fonts and varied templates. PP can be used for enhancing lectures in classrooms or at academic conferences. PP, however, has both advantages and disadvantages when used in the L2 classroom as presented below.

1. Benefits of PP presentations in EFL language classrooms

Owing to its striking characteristics and its aesthetic value mentioned above, using PP presentations in classroom can bring many benefits. First, using a PP presentation can help promote participatory learning. It can help structure the content and process a lesson or lecture more effectively (Mason and Hlynka, 1998) or aiding note-taking (Cook, 1998). The research into SS' attitudes and perception also found that PP can help draw SS attention to the key points of the lectures, which would then help them in preparation for exams (Susskind, 2005). Another advantage of using PP is that it can offer SS an opportunity to be active participants in the learning process. It can also help to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills by providing SS an opportunity to apply their knowledge (Bell, 1996). In addition, researchers have found that visual aspects can be engaging to SS. For example, PP presentations such as presenting a fresh look at course material leads to more engaging presentations (Savage and Vogel 1996) activates SS' imagery systems as information (e.g., instructional materials) is presented in non-verbal forms (Rose, 2001; Clark and Paivo, 1991). Moreover, animation, one characteristic of PP, has been found effective in illustrating complex structural, functional, and procedural relationships among objects and events which makes it easier for SS to conceptualize information (Beerman, 1996).

In summary, the use of PP is very necessary. That is because it has many advantages such as making presentations aesthetic appeal with multimedia, understandability of materials, making SS' attitudes positive towards teachers and presentations, organizing the content and the process of a presentation, reinforcing instruction and increasing SS' motivation. Therefore, each teacher needs to use PP properly to increase the effectiveness of presenting a lesson.

2. Drawbacks of PP presentations in EFL language classrooms

Despite the advantages, PP presentations in EFL teaching are hampered by several problems as well. First, there is less interaction between the teacher and SS during the EFL class. Also, talking about interaction in the classroom, Pauw (2002) fears that using PP in the classroom might replace the interaction among SS during class discussion, making

teaching class more like leading a business meeting. Moreover, she is concerned that a thoughtless use of slide presentations may make SS 'passive consumers of visual entertainment' with the possibility of having limited interaction with other SS and the teacher. Second, PP presentations give the teacher more chances to give too much information in one class, leading to SS being overwhelmed. Third, time is insufficient for SS to focus, build and reflect on the content in PP presentations because the conventional school schedule is often broken into 45-minute blocks. Finally, PP technology helps teachers communicate information more quickly, but does not necessarily help them analyze whether or not the information is accurate, relevant, or current. For SS, irrelevant images make them confused and unable to listen to the teacher's lecture. Also, the speed of PP slides increases, causing difficulty for SS in taking relevant notes. For example, SS are confused as to where they should pay attention - the words on the screen; what the teacher is saying, or making notes, etc. Consequently, SS depend on the teachers' outlines and become passive receivers of information.

In short, teachers need to use a variety of teaching methods to keep SS interested in learning. PP is only one of those tools. When using it, teachers should consider these drawbacks so that they can limit its disadvantages.

The survey

1. Participants

318 SS (138 male, 180 female) from four high schools in AG province including Thủ Khoa Nghĩa high school (Châu Đốc city), Chu Văn An high school (Phú Tân district), Tân Châu high school (Tân Châu town) and Nguyễn Hữu Cảnh high school (Chợ Mới district) took part in the present study. The SS' ages ranged from 17 to 18 with and they have studied English as a school subject for more than 6 years.

2. Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of 25 items to measure the SS' evaluation of PP presentations used in teaching English. A five-point Likert Scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used. The items were tailored to explore the favorableness as well as the difficulties when SS were instructed with PP presentations. The researcher generated 25 possible factors depending on the results of relevant studies as well as her experience as an English language teacher which enabled her to identify some unfavorable and favorable factors which might affect SS learning English.

The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese to prevent any interference due to misunderstanding in L2 and checked by 5 other teachers to ensure that the items retained their essential meanings and the translation was easy to understand.

3. Data Analysis

This study used the quantitative data from Likert-scale of 5-points questionnaire (Appendix). The goal was to analyze the data for general response patterns, which in turn would be used to investigate the students' perspectives towards the benefits and drawbacks of PP in language teaching.

The quantitative data was entered into SPSS 16.0. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire. A Pair-sample t test was run to examine whether the total mean score of the benefits is different from that of the drawbacks of using PP in language teaching. Descriptive statistic calculation was also used to compare the mean score of each benefit as well as each drawback to see which one is dominant. A One-sample t test was used to examine whether the mean score of a participant in responding to item 25 (general perspective about using PP in EFL teaching) is different from the accepted mean for positive attitude towards the use of PP in EFL classrooms.

4. Results, Discussion and Implications

4.1. Results

Cronbach's alpha, calculated to estimate the reliability of the questionnaire, was 0.734 ($N = 26$) for the questionnaire as a whole. This number indicates that the questionnaire is acceptable to guarantee for the reliability of this study. The total mean score for benefits and drawbacks of using PP in language teaching from students' perspective is $M_{(\text{benefits})} = 3.6688$ ($N = 318$) and $M_{(\text{drawbacks})} = 2.9602$ ($N = 318$). The standard deviation ($Sd_{(\text{benefits})} = 0.53019$ and $Sd_{(\text{drawbacks})} = 0.62628$) showed that there is not much difference in SS' perspectives. The results indicated the participants have a positive attitude towards the use of PP in language teaching rather than negative.

A Pair-sample t test was conducted on the participants' perspectives about the benefits and drawbacks of using PP in EFL teaching to evaluate whether the mean score of benefit is higher than that of drawback. The results revealed that the mean score for benefits of PP ($M = 3.6688$, $SD = 0.53019$) was significantly larger than the mean score for drawbacks ($M = 2.9602$, $SD = 0.62628$), $t = 14.199$, $p = 0.000$ (100% of confidence). The standardized effect size $d = 0.787433$ was a medium size. This fact supported the conclusion that the participants' perspective on the benefits of PP in EFL teaching is better than the drawbacks. Furthermore, this perspective of using PP in EFL teaching is not influenced by any intervention.

Chart 1 presented the mean scores for benefits of using PP in EFL teaching from SS' perspective. The chart showed that the top five benefits of using PP in EFL teaching from SS' perspective are making better use of examples and illustrations (q4, $M=4.1415$), developing creative thinking on the topic of the lesson (q13, $M=3.9340$), presenting the

materials in ways which are simpler, more concise and easier to understand (q1, M=3.8742), the high visual quality (q2, M=3.8711) and getting SS' attention on the lessons (q6, M=3.7862). These are the most prominent benefits of using PP in EFL teaching from student perspective, according to the statistics.

Chart 1: The mean score for benefits of using PP in EFL teaching from SS' perspective

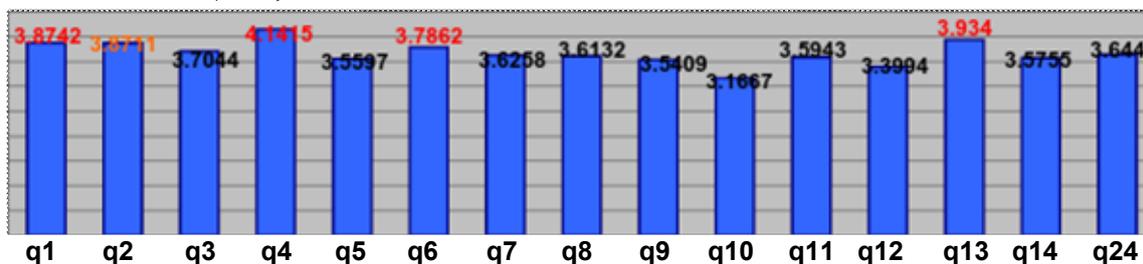


Chart 2: The Mean score for drawbacks of using PP in EFL teaching in SS' perspective

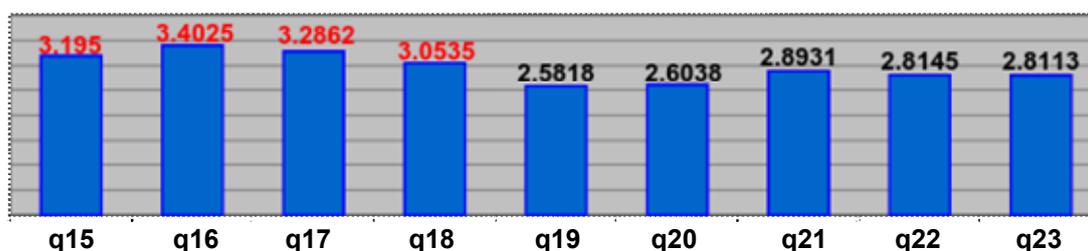


Chart 2 indicated the mean score for drawbacks of using PP in EFL teaching from the student perspective. As can be seen from the chart, delivering the lectures too quickly is the greatest disadvantage (q16, M=3.4025). The other three more dominant disadvantages, one after another, are slides being overloaded with special effects (q17, M=3.2862), SS concentrating on the slides rather than on the lessons (q15, M=3.195) and overloaded with materials (q18, M=3.0535). The mean score for other drawbacks (q19, 20, 21, 22, 23) just range from 2.8931 to 2.5818, lower than 3.0, the middle point of the scale. These results revealed that they are not really the disadvantages of PP.

A One-sample t test was conducted on the SS' general perspective about using PP in EFL teaching to evaluate whether the mean was significantly different from 3.0 (the middle point of the scale), the accepted mean for positive attitude towards PP. The sample mean M=3.6384 (Sd=1.05288) was significantly different from 3.0, $t=10.812$, $df=317$, $p=.000$

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
q25	318	3.6384	1.05288	.05904

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
q25	10.812	317	.000	.63836	.5222	.7545

The 95% of confidence interval of the difference range from (.5222– .7545) and the effect size $d=.606299$, a small effect. The results support the conclusion that the participants' general perspective of PP in EFL teaching was higher than that of the accepted mean.

4.2. Discussion and Implications

This study investigated the effectiveness of PP presentation EFL lessons on high school SS in AG province by examining their benefits and drawbacks from the SS' point of views. The first research question concerned student attitudes toward the use of PP in EFL classroom as compared to traditional instruction. The results demonstrated that more than 60 % (N=201) of the participating SS had significantly positive attitudes about utilizing PP in EFL learning. Thus, this research corroborates results from other studies observing that SS perceive lectures given using PP as better than those given using traditional instructional methods in the EFL classroom (Nouri, H. and Shahid, A., 2005; Iwanski, G.E., 2000). However, more than one third of the participants (N= 117) did not totally agree that using PP presentations offers more advantages over the traditional lectures. This suggested that PP is not only the tool that SS are interested in. Teachers need to use a variety of teaching methods to engage SS in learning and be flexible to decide whether or not to use PP in some contexts, with certain instructional styles and in particular lessons. Using PP presentations in the EFL classroom, therefore, needs to be reexamined and possibly modified as the SS' needs change. This can be achieved by doing periodic evaluations of the SS' feelings toward the lectures.

The second research question asked, *'Which are the most preferred benefits and which are the worst effects of using PP in EFL teaching?'*. This study's survey found SS' high support of benefits in questions 4, 13, 1 and 6. Thus, the four highest potential PP benefits from SS responses (Figure 1) are, namely 'make better use of examples and illustrations', 'present materials in ways to which are simpler, concise and easy to understand', 'develop creative thinking', and 'got SS' attention' related to visual effects. Obviously, the visual aspects can be engaging to SS who are raised in the digital world and are more interested in clearly presented materials, which can thus enhance their learning.

In addition, by integrating a variety of media sources such as graphs, sound and visuals to present examples and illustrations for Abstract and complex materials, PP lessons increased student comprehension and interest as well as developed their creative thinking. Clark and Paivio (1991) and Rose (2001) noted that presentation of learning materials in graphical form is beneficial for SS because the graphical nature of the PP presentation arouses SS' imagery systems and could contribute to comprehension and improve short and long-term memory. In a PP presentation lesson, since topics are presented in a hierarchical fashion with graphics, color, and animation, SS could 'use a mental image of that outline to study, to retrieve the information on a test, to organize their answers for an essay question, and to perform other educational tasks' (Clark and Paivio, 1991. p.176). This indicated that choosing relevant and appropriate diagrams, images, animations and video clips is very important. Nevertheless, Bartsch et al (2003) in his study showed that irrelevant images adversely affected student learning, with SS appearing confused and unable to listen to the teacher while they are trying to work out the relevance of the image. It is suggested that even if the teacher thinks an image or animation is very relevant, it is worth spending a few moments making this relevance explicit to SS to overcome any confusion that they may have about it.

Another benefit of PP lectures reported is "the visual quality of PP lessons was easy to read". In order to avoid illegible handwriting on the boards as well as help to write accurate notes, some teachers use PP to present materials to SS. From the SS' viewpoint, with various font sizes and multiple colors in layouts and background, the visual quality of PP presentations lessons helps information to be presented more clearly, better well-organized and more legible than traditional methods. In addition, Dwyer and Lamberski (1983) concluded that when color is central to the ideas and concepts being presented and the SS pay attention, the use of color improves learning.

On the other hand, the results of the questionnaire data also reported that what SS found problematic about lectures supported by PP (Figure 2) was that the lessons are delivered too quickly, they can be overloaded with material or special effects and SS are more attracted by the slides than the lessons. The reasons why SS find delivery of lectures too fast and overloaded with information could be explained as follows. First, Susskind (2005)

and Coursey (2003) think that when using the PP software, the information is organized, structured and packaged, so there is no longer the 'natural break' such as the time when the teachers clean the board. This would have created natural pauses during which SS could consolidate their notes or just have sufficient time to focus, build, and reflect in order to comprehend the materials. Thus, if SS are expected to be taking notes using PP handouts as a guide, teachers should consciously build in pauses to give SS an opportunity to make these notes. Second, with PP presentations, it is easy to put a lot of information on one slide, which is time-consuming for SS to copy. Research reports that SS will try to write everything presented, even if they are told that it is not necessary or that it is in the book. Therefore, Sotone and Mayer Escoe (1999) suggested that the teacher should prepare a note outline containing some of the materials with space for SS to write other things. This has the dual advantage of saving copying time and of helping SS to organize notes. Third, Miltenoff (2003) indicates that in PP presentations classrooms, teachers do not need to write information on the blackboard, but just click the mouse. Therefore, it is likely that they give too much information in one class, which can be difficult for SS to comprehend. Consequently, SS may feel that they are overwhelmed with a large amount of information given and become too passive in class.

Interestingly enough, although the option 'got SS attention' is considered as one of the benefits of them is EFL learning, it is also in the drawback list of PP presentations from SS' points of view. The results showed that 41.2% SS (N= 131) admitted that they are more attracted by the slides than the lessons. It is indicated that SS' attention on the slide shows is more or less negative. Once the teacher used pictures and sound effects to a greater degree, SS seemed to pay more attention to the slides than the lessons. The background, colorful pictures, transitions and animations may become the focus instead of the main points of the lessons.

Conclusion

The present study found that approximately 60% of the participants have more favorable attitudes toward PP presentations than traditional instructions in the EFL classroom. From the SS' perspective, PP lessons offer remarkable opportunities yet also bring new challenges in EFL learning. Complicated topics can be explained and understood better with the aid of pictures, graphs, animations and simulations in PP lectures. These are the prominent benefits of PP. However, too many special effects and too much information per slide are the downsides to PP. These may make SS fail to intellectually engage with the subject matter. Therefore, teachers should consider more seriously when and how they use that tool to engage SS with the curriculum. When utilizing, teachers should consider putting aside the text-heavy or overused special effect slides and using more imagery to make SS critically think about the topic of the lesson. In other words, the use of PP in the classroom should not be considered an end in itself. The integration of PP in the classroom

should go way beyond the border of putting words or images on slides. Thoughtfully creating PP slides which do not only appear visually interesting, aesthetically pleasing, relevant but also less text-heavy or overused special effects could convey the lesson content more effectively to SS.

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THE COMBINATION OF CLIL AND ICT IN TEACHING CULTURAL STUDIES COURSES

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Abstract

As requirements for the BA degree of English language majors at many universities nationwide, cultural studies courses play an important part in the tertiary curriculum. However, the teachers in charge of these courses are expected to encounter plenty of problems among which are teaching the content and giving the students sufficient chances to practice language at the same time as well as keeping the students informed of the new materials or assigning homework. This paper aims to briefly discuss the idea of CLIL and ICT (specifically the use of Moodle) from a teacher's point of view and how these can facilitate the classes of cultural studies as well as some problems encountered by the author during the implementation in his teaching of American Studies at the English Department, Ho Chi Minh city University of Education (henceforth ED-HCMUE).

Keywords: CLIL, ICT, Moodle, cultural studies, American Studies.

There would be a big gap in the tertiary curriculum for the language majors if it were not for the courses of cultural studies. This is because those courses not only provide students with useful knowledge which they can apply in their future careers but also give them chances to practice the language they major in. However, how to handle both language practice and subject content as well as manage classrooms with increasing number of students at the same time has raised a challenging question for teachers and education managers. To some extent, this question can be addressed thanks to the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

As first used by the European Network of Administrators, Researchers and Practitioners (CLIC) in 1994 (Coyle, 2006) and then widely spreading over Europe as well as the world, the term CLIL involves 'any activities in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a nonlanguage subject in which both language and subject have a joint role' (Marsh, 2002).

Obviously, as the knowledge of the language becomes the means of learning content, many advantages can be found in CLIL:

First and foremost, it is undeniably time-saving as learners can acquire the desired knowledge as well as practice the target language at the same time. As the CLIL lessons are real-life-situation-based, it is more interesting and also increases learner motivation (Coyle, Holmes, & King, 2009; Darn, 2009) as the learners can apply the language and knowledge they have learnt in no time. In fact, there are fewer chances that the learners may forget the lessons, since they have to practice or at least come across the content of the lessons in daily activities. Furthermore, according to Coyle, Holmes, & King (2009) and Darn (2009), CLIL also helps to prepare for internationalisation and get the learners ready for their future studies and careers.

Although few teaching disadvantages are expected in the practice of good CLIL (Coyle, Holmes, & King, 2009), it is true that the courses will be more challenging for the teachers as they have to keep the balance between the content and language in the course by investing more time in finding new ways of teaching and new teaching materials as well. In fact, as there are few teachers who can be both linguistically and professionally competent, upskilling programmes are also needed.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Nowadays, as a medium of learning and teaching, ICT provides digital environments in which plenty of new pedagogical approaches and philosophies may be applied. Indeed, the role of ICT in education is undeniable as the rapid advancing modern technology has enabled human beings to learn anything, anywhere or anytime they desire.

As in a limited time frame, it is impossible to discuss the limitless application of ICT in language teaching, let alone education in general, this paper can just concentrate on the use of Moodle, which is getting more and more popular among language teachers in Vietnam.

The acronym MOODLE stands for *Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment* and it is usually classified as a Course Management System (CMS), a Learning Management System (LMS), a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or an e-learning platform (Lopes, 2011). The first Moodle site was launched in November, 2001 (Moodle, 2002). Since its birth, Moodle has been continuously developing and at the time this paper is prepared, the latest release is 2.9.2+. It is not such a challenging task to name some of Moodle's strengths:

Firstly, in this environment or platform, the teacher can easily share course materials, grade the assignments or just have the quizzes automatically marked and perform a variety of other magical tasks among which are: uploading files/folders, giving time-restricted assignments and quizzes, creating forums for discussion and exporting results to a wide range of file formats. For a more detailed introduction and description of activities available on Moodle, please refer to Moodle (n.d.), Lopes (2011) and Lopes (2014).

Secondly, thanks to its versatility, Moodle can satisfy a wide range of users with different needs of training, from university scholars to company's human resource staff. Thirdly and also most importantly, this managing system is totally open, which enables anyone with sufficient IT skills to develop his or her own advanced website with special add-ons to meet their needs without any fees.

With such benefits, Moodle was successfully piloted and has recently been adopted by many teachers at ED-HCMUE.

CLIL and ICT in teaching and learning

In this part, the implementation of CLIL and ICT will be demonstrated in the example of American Studies at ED-HCMUE.

American Studies is a 2-credit, 15-week, 30-period course which not only focuses on basic and recent information of the USA (content) but also creates an advanced English-speaking environment (language) for students with the majority of whom are English language majors.

With regard to curriculum, the course shared the 4Cs (Coyle, 1999 and Darn, 2009) with a CLIL course.

1. **Content** - Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum:

American Studies mainly aims to provide students with knowledge of American history, culture and social institutions. In addition, some aspects of American culture are analysed and discussed in comparison with those of Vietnam culture.

2. **Communication** - Using language to learn whilst learning to use language: The course gives students chances to develop comprehensive English language skills (listening, speaking, reading & writing) in addition to presentation skills.

3. **Cognition** - Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (Abstract and concrete), understanding and language:

As critical thinking underpins research skills, the group in charge of a presentation needs to process the information after collecting it from various sources. If the students fail to have good reasons for the information they choose to present, the score can be negatively affected, especially in the part of post-presentation questions and answers when tricky questions from the teacher and their classmates are raised. In the course, the diversity of viewpoints is highly recognised as long as the opinions are firmly and logically supported by reliable and valuable sources.

4. **Culture** - Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepens awareness of otherness and self:

In fact, the course syllabus requires students to make comparisons between Vietnam and the US in different aspects whenever possible so that they can understand American culture while appreciating Vietnamese traditions.

As for the use of ICT, with the introduction of the English Department Mobile Assisted Language Learning (ED MALL) website at <http://mlearning.hcmup.edu.vn/>, which is developed by Dr Nguyen Ngoc Vu, ICT has really seen its important role in many courses at ED-HCMUE.

On one hand, this technical aid has proven very valuable as now one teacher can manage many classes with hundreds of students at the same time. Besides, many forums were created so that the instructor and students can discuss lesson contents, therefore, the students are encouraged to indulge themselves more in the course. Personally, what the author appreciates most are the online quizzes as every student is graded automatically and immediately as soon as they have finished the test. Afterwards the results can be exported to various data file format for further process. This method is absolutely more time-efficient and accurate than spending days marking paper by paper. Moreover, every activity in the system is automatically recorded, which is very useful in assessing student's ongoing performance during the course as well as strengthening course transparency and improving fairness between course members.

On the other hand, as similar to other ICT applications, Moodle also has its drawbacks. First of all, despite the low requirements of hardware, it is highly dependent on the Internet. In reality, students in the author's classes experienced many cases in which they lost the connection to the server and then had to restart their attempts of the home-quiz. In this case, a good piece of advice for the students is that they themselves must make sure the computer power as well as the Internet connection is always on and stable during the quiz. In fact, it is also possible to conduct synchronous online quizzes on Moodle for official grading as well; however, this may be a great barrier for the application of Moodle-based courses in the rural areas where the conditions of infrastructure are not favourable.

The second drawback is that before enjoying the automatic quiz marking, the teacher must spend a significant amount of time preparing the quiz, which is rather time-consuming at the beginning. As the preparation may even get more complicated if multimedia involves, the teacher should have all the 'ingredients' such as questions, answers and visual aids available before actually 'cook' the test. It is also advisable to preview the quiz before the launch to avoid any technical problems.

In terms of the students, instructing them to learn in the system is not as difficult as introducing them to the course because this involves multiple steps of registering for the system and enrolling on the desired course. In order to make this as smooth as possible, it is necessary that the teacher in charge should closely cooperate with the site admin to give the students their Moodle accounts and later enroll them for the indicated course.

To summarise, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, Moodle plays the role of a favourable environment in which CLIL elements can easily interact and the teaching-learning process will take place smoothly. In the author’s case, despite some remaining shortcomings, the combination of CLIL and ICT in American Studies has proven to be effective as it has productively facilitated the teaching and learning of the course so far. However, as this paper was largely based on personal experience, the reflections of other teachers in the same field of interest are greatly needed so as to verify the usefulness of this model.

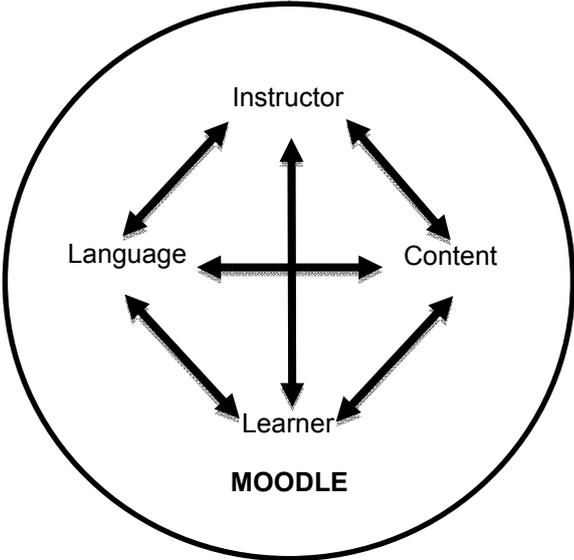


Figure: CLIL and ICT (Moodle) in learning and teaching

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SUB-THEME

CULTURAL ISSUES

IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

REFLECTIVE JOURNALS – A USEFUL TECHNIQUE TO DEVELOP READING SKILL FOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT COLLEGES IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AREA OF NORTHEASTERN VIETNAM

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Abstract

This paper reports a part of a study about culturally responsive strategies in English Language Teaching for Muong Ethnic minority students in Vietnam. This section of the study explored the Muong students' culture in order to create the culturally responsive learning environment for Muong students in the English classroom of a college in the mountainous area of Vietnam. It employed the data from the researcher's autoethnographic writing, three focus group interviews with Muong villagers, and four interviews with Muong college teachers. The findings showed some Muong cultural features that were helpful for creating a safe learning environment for Muong students including hospitality and friendliness, working together, equal relationships in the family, and maintaining harmony. They have emotional expectations such as to be encouraged, to be understood and cared for, to be respected and treated fairly, and to be supported. The paper highlights that it is important for this demographic's teachers of English to have a certain understanding of Muong students' culture.

Keywords: English language teaching, culturally responsive teaching.

Introduction

Maximising student learning is a critical concern at every higher educational institution, particularly those with students from various cultures, ethnicities, and linguistic backgrounds. The students at the research site come from different districts of the mountainous locale of North Vietnam, and most of them belong to ethnic minority groups which include Muong, Thai, H'Mong, and Dao. Among these, Muong students are the most prevalent (Hoa Binh College of Education, 2009).

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the mountainous areas in Vietnam face challenges in improving students' learning, because of the distinct ethnic groups with unique religious, linguistic, and cultural characteristics and identities who attend their classes. One of the challenges the teachers often face is that Muong students seem to hesitate to take part in the learning activities. This research focuses on the cultural factors that may have impacts on students' learning, which may help the teachers from both Muong and non-Muong groups recognise the importance of the students' cultural values in order to find out the best way to approach culturally responsive ELT for Muong students' learning.

Literature Review

As defined by Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching (CRT) “uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches *to and through* the strengths of these students” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). It focuses on improving the ethnically diverse students' learning performance by incorporating their cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives as conduits for teaching and learning processes. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) offered a motivational framework for CRT which presents four conditions that teachers and learners should enhance, one of which focused on establishing inclusion. This refers to norms and practices that are woven together to create a learning environment in which learners and teachers feel respected and connected to one another.

The implementation of CRT has been advocated in many educational contexts with ethnically diverse students and by a number of scholars. Studies emphasize the importance of mediating teachers' behaviours and skills of classroom management for a culturally compatible classroom environment (Adds, Hall, Higgins, & Higgins, 2011; Averill & Clark, 2012; Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, & Elliott, 2009; Thanh & Gillies, 2010). In the context of secondary education, Averill and Clark (2012) discussed that teachers' respectful behaviour is crucially important for effective teacher-student relationships, and this is an essential factor to increase achievement for year 12 and 13 mathematics students in New Zealand. The teachers' respectful behaviours include listening to students, being well-prepared and on time, holding high academic expectations, and treating students' errors constructively.

Another study carried out in New Zealand (Adds et al., 2011) investigated how the cultural space, *marae* (a Māori building complex including a carved meeting house), was used as a teaching and learning tool to encourage quality learning in higher education in the New Zealand context. The result showed that the *marae* learning environment encouraged ethnic learners to form relationships with their classmates, provided them with a greater

sense of personal identity, helped create a culturally appropriate mood for learning, and enabled the practice of the Māori language and culture in the *marae* space.

With respect to EFL teaching and learning at tertiary level in Vietnam, there has been limited research exploring the use of a strategy matching with Vietnamese culture. Of this limited research, Thanh and Gillies (2010), in the design-based study, explored how students grouped in cooperative learning so that they could maximize their opportunities to learn. Participants were 125 university students in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam who participated in an intervention. Data collected via a questionnaire survey and interview showed that friendship groupings were most preferred. It was discussed that this preference may have originated from Vietnamese cultural characteristics emphasising the importance of close personal relationships (i.e., students grouped with friends who can easily understand them).

Taken together, it is worth noting that these studies have emphasized the importance of a culturally compatible learning environment in the classroom in higher education as well as in the other contexts. The main findings of most studies highlighted the close relationship among students and between the teacher and students for a culturally compatible learning environment. The teachers' behaviours toward students, such as respect, encouragement, and caring were found to be essential factors for the culturally compatible learning environment. Particularly, students found a good atmosphere of learning and relationship in their cultural space, which provided a supportive learning environment (Addis et al., 2011). However, in the research field none of the studies have explored how to create a learning environment that is culturally appropriate for the ethnic students in Vietnam.

Methods

Research questions

What Muong cultural factors of communication could be helpful for a safe learning environment for Muong students?

Participants

This research consisted of three sets of research participants: the researcher of this study, three groups of the Muong villagers (group 1 consisted of six participants, and groups 2 and 3 both consisted of seven participants each. Most of these Muong villagers were farmers), and four Muong college teachers.

Data collection methods

An exploration into dimensions of Muong cultural communication was conducted. The data collection methods used were autoethnographic writing, focus group interview (Appendix 1), and individual interview (Appendix 2).

Researcher's Autoethnographic writing

Autoethnography was appropriate for me to discover the relationship to others, others of similarity, others of difference, and others of opposition (Chang, 2008). It helped me see my connection to Muong culture where I come from and allowed me to delve deeply into, and facilitate the availability of, the personal experience as primary data (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008) and as a guide to more deeply investigate my participants' experiences (Kiesinger, 1998).

Muong villager focus-group interviews

Semi-structured focus group interviews were used to collect data from Muong villagers. Interviews were audio-recorded. Note taking was used as a back up to audio-recording, in case there proved to be any issues with the audio-recording process (Creswell, 2009). The interviews focused on the issues relating to the communication dimensions of Muong culture. All of the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese because all Muong people can speak Vietnamese, and so that everything could be fully captured by the researcher. The interviews were then transcribed. I returned to each village with the transcription to check if they agreed with the content of the interview.

Muong college teacher interview

The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with four Muong college teachers to collect information on the experiences of their tertiary education. The interview information was then used to compare with my own experiences of tertiary education. This was to enhance the validity of the autoethnography data, as it could help me identify if I had experiences in common with other Muong college teachers (Creswell, 2009). Each interview lasted about 20 minutes, the questions of which were predominantly about the learning issues experienced during the interviewee's tertiary education. All of interviews were audio-recorded.

Data analysis

The inductive method was used for analysis of the qualitative data, including autoethnographic writing and interviews. All the interviews were transcribed and then coded by Nvivo.

Summary of findings

The data indicated some cultural factors in communication that could be helpful for the teacher to create a safe learning environment for students, including hospitability, friendliness, working together, equal relationships in the family, and maintaining harmony. It is important to note for hospitability and friendliness that Muong people often hug and pat each other's shoulders. Muong people show their expectations in learning, such as to be

encouraged, to be understood and cared for, to be respected and treated equally, and to be supported.

Discussion of the findings

In order to implement CRT, teachers need to develop a knowledge base for CRT based on factual information about the particularities of the culture of specific ethnic groups (Gay, 2002). This notion is adopted in this research to identify the cultural features in communication, which could be useful for teachers to establish closer relationships with Muong students. All the features mentioned in the findings indicate that the Muong people value maintaining good relationships in the community.

The hospitality and friendliness of the Muong people are expressed in the example of guests who come to a Muong house are often invited for a drink or meal. The most delicious foods are made to welcome guests. This is particularly conveyed in the Muong saying about preparing food for invited guests: “*Com nếp, cơm chằm trên nương, trên ná. Cá nhỏ, cá to trong ao, dưới suối. Săn đười trong rừng được thú, được chim. Đi hái, đi tìm được rau, được quả*” (which means: go and get glutinous rice on the terrace field. Go and get big and small fish in the pond or stream. Go and hunt animals in the wood. Go and pick up vegetables and fruits), or another saying “*Khách đến nhà không gà cũng lợn*” (which means: when guests come, either chicken or pork is offered). It appears that the hospitality and friendliness of the Muong people make a contribution to the particularities of Muong cultural communication. Furthermore, the hospitality and friendliness are shown in the non-verbal behaviours of hugging and patting on each other’s shoulders. It is possible that these behaviours reflect how Muong people think and behave in social relationships, as it has been pointed out that culture influences “what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore how we think; and what we think about” (Porter & Samovar, 1991, p. 21).

Also regarding the maintenance of good relationships in the community, it is found that Muong people value working together, equal relationships in the family, and maintaining harmony. Helping each other in all jobs, or working together, was found to be the usual way of organising daily life. It is in accordance with opinions about Muong culture raised by Yen (2009) that all jobs, big or small, are dealt with communally and not only by relatives but also neighbours. It is mirrored in the Muong saying about the unity within the Muong community “*Một người đàn ông không làm nổi nhà, một người đàn bà không làm nổi khung dệt*” (which means: A man cannot make a house, a woman cannot make a loom). It appears that the consensus contributes to the good relationship in Muong’s communication.

Regarding equality in Muong family relationships, findings show that family members treated each other fairly, and all the jobs are discussed to achieve agreement before being

actioned. This has been supported by several opinions about the cultural communication of the Muong people (e.g., Yen, 2009; Mai & Tan, 1999; Tan, 2000). Furthermore, in family communication, children are not imposed on by their parents. This could possibly be because Muong people respect each other. It could be linked to the saying of the Muong people “*Kính trên nhường dưới*” (which means: Respect the elder, make concessions to the younger). With regard to equality in familial relationships, it seems to contrast with the unequal familial relationships espoused by Confucian culture (Hofstede, 1997). According to the Muong people, their ‘equal relationship’ preference seems to be different from the Kinh dominant people, whose culture is affected by Confucianism, in which the less powerful members of the society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1997).

Maintaining harmony is found to be a feature of the Muong people for maintaining good relationships. For example, Muong people rarely show their anger on their face in order to maintain harmony. One point to note that this ‘not showing the anger’ is quite different from the Kinh dominant people of Vietnam. This could be seen in the Muong saying about maintaining harmony when guests visit their houses: “*Khách đến nhà không đánh chó, khách đến ngõ không mắng mèo*” (which means: when guests are in our houses, we do not beat the dog; when guests are in the gate, we do not shout at the cat). The Muong cultural tenet of maintaining harmony is expressed even to the pets in the house.

In brief, these cultural features reveal that Muong people are in favour of a good relationship in communication. This was carried out by being harmonious to each other, equal with each other, helping each other, and respecting each other. The inclusion of these features could address a safe learning environment for Muong students where friendliness and equal relationships are especially highlighted.

Muong people have emotional expectations in learning, such as to be encouraged, to be understood and cared for, to be respected and treated fairly, and to be supported. The expectations in learning of the Muong people seem to be consistent with the students in other contexts as well, and is revealed to be in relation with students’ success. For instance, students in Taiwan preferred a learning environment with encouragement and respect (Pan et al., 2010), the achievement of students in New Zealand was associated with a learning environment with care by encouragement, assistance, and a learning community (Averill & Clark, 2006). Briefly put, the teacher’s attitudes and behaviours are important for Muong students’ achievement. A safe learning environment for the Muong learner could be a place of encouragement, understanding, care, respect, equality, and support for one another.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to gain insights into the Muong cultural features in communication and how they are associated with the learning of Muong people. It aims to

look for the cultural factors in communication with possible interpretations, which could be helpful to build an ELT approach that is culturally responsive to Muong students, particularly, to create a learning environment that is culturally responsive to Muong students. It is worth noting that establishing inclusion among students by giving them a climate of respect and a feeling of connection is crucial to motivate students to engage in learning activities (Wlodkowski, 2008). This would be more effective if teachers have an understanding of how culture can shape students' learning (Ginsberg, 2005), how culture shapes students' attitudes, and how culture shapes students' communication behaviour. In a language class, culture is always a critical factor that the teacher must be aware of, because it is embedded in students' own language and informs practiced rituals that shape thinking (Kim & Lee, 2012).

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VIETNAMESE-ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF EXHIBIT LABELS AT THE VIETNAM MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper looks at strategies used in Vietnamese-English translations of exhibit labels at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Hanoi. This study only investigates the translation of object labels, which provide information, such as description or title, date or age, artist or user, material composition, and sometimes a brief text on a particular object. As the object labels consist of cultural terms, which describe the everyday life of ethnic people in Vietnam, the problem of non-equivalence at word level arises due to the differences between the Vietnamese and English cultures. To tackle the problem, several strategies were used to best convey the information to foreign visitors.

Keywords: exhibit labels, translation, non-equivalence, strategies

Introduction

The Vietnam Museum of Ethnology founded in 1997 is a cultural and scientific center. It studies, collects, classifies, preserves, restores and exhibits cultural and historical values of all ethnic groups in Vietnam. People visit the museum not only to amuse themselves but also to study ethnic groups as well as various cultural values of Vietnamese people. The museum has become a popular destination for foreign tourists over the past years.

The translation of exhibit labels is not at all an easy process as many concepts of the life of Vietnamese ethnic people do not have English equivalents. The translators have to use lots of translation strategies in transferring the concepts in a way that is most understandable to foreign visitors. However, the translators experience some difficulties in translating the concepts due to non-equivalence at word level.

So far, not much research on the Vietnamese – English translation of exhibit labels has been conducted. Therefore, an investigation into the Vietnamese – English translation of exhibit labels in the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology is really necessary. In the hope for some suggestions of implications that can be of some use to those who are responsible for translating exhibit labels in the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology as well as in other museums, the author would like to carry out this study to answer the question: What are the translation strategies used in the translation of exhibit labels in the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology (VME)?

Strategies used in the translation of exhibit labels in vme

According to Baker (1994), there are several types of non-equivalence at word level including culture-specific concepts, lack of specific terms, etc. He also lists strategies used by translators to deal with these types of non-equivalence. As exhibit labels at VME mostly consist of culture-specific concepts, various strategies were adopted when they were translated into the English language.

Translation using loan words

This strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items. In the case of VME, most of the concepts are about the life of ethnic groups in Vietnam; the translators could not find equivalents for the concepts, so they had to use the original words in their translation.

The followings are examples of using loan words in translation:

Example 1. Ông Địa = Ong Dia, water puppet

In this example, the concept ‘Ông Địa’ is truly culture-specific. It is a famous and unique character in Vietnamese water puppetry and cannot be found in any other cultures. The translators had no other ways than using this concept accompanied by an explanation ‘water puppet’.

Example 2. Tượng thờ tổ nghề hát bội = ritual dolls for Hat bội singers.

Similar to ‘Ông Địa’, ‘hát bội’ is a concept that only exists in Vietnamese culture and have no equivalents in the English language. The translators reused this concept in the translation without any explanation for it. Therefore, it might be a problem for foreign visitors to understand the concept.

Example 3. Lễ lấu then của người Tày = The ‘lau then’ ceremony of the Tay.

This object label is accompanied by a text panel which explained very clearly about the origin and meaning of the ceremony. Foreign visitors, therefore, can understand the concept ‘lau then’. Translation by a more general word (superordinate).

This strategy is used a lot in the translation of cultural items where there is a relative lack of specificity in the English language.

Example 1. Tiên nước = fairy.

If translated word by word, the English version must be ‘water fairy’. In this case, however, the English culture does not accept such a concept. Therefore, the translators used a more general word for it – ‘fairy’.

Example 2. Úp nôm = fisherman.

Fisherman is the superordinate word for ‘úp nôm’, which means a fisherman using a specific fishing tackle to catch fish.

More examples are:

Đèn kéo quân = lantern.

Đèn xếp = lantern.

Hũ đựng mè = spice jar.

All the examples above illustrate the use of a superordinate to overcome the lack of a specific term in the English language. “đèn kéo quân” and “đèn xếp” can both be seen as types of “lantern”. Similarly, “mè” is one particular type of “spice”, which has no equivalence in the English culture. The translators had to find a more general word to cover the core propositional meaning of the missing hyponym in the target language.

This strategy is really necessary in translating culture-specific item with a target language item that does not have the same propositional meaning. It is specially used in the translation of concepts related to musical instruments which do not have equivalents between the two languages. Most of the musical instruments belonging to Vietnamese ethnic groups are unique; therefore the translators had to use culture-specific items to describe them. By using this strategy, the translators can make the labels understood by foreign visitors.

Example. Đàn gáo = two-stringed fiddle.

Đàn nguyệt = two-stringed lute.

Đàn bầu = monochord.

Kèn bóp = shawn.

Phách = clappet.

Tiêu = flute.

Đàn nguyệt = zither.

Trống một mặt = drum.

Đàn độc huyền = monochord.

Dây lục lạc = rattle.

Đàn goong mười dây = 10-stringed lute.

Đàn tinhnhinh = zither.

Đàn ống tre = tubular zither.

Nhị = fiddle.

Khèn = mouth organ.

This strategy is used to lexicalise a concept in the SL in a different form, which make it easier to understand the concept. The translators have paraphrased some items as a way of explaining the complex concepts in the ethnic cultures.

Example 1. Bung trống com = buffalo skin to be nailed on to body of rice drum

In the example, the translators have explained the meaning of the word ‘bung’ by a longer expression. The English label, in this case, can be also useful for some Vietnamese visitors. Sometimes, Vietnamese visitors do not know what ‘bung’ means as this word is not common in the Vietnamese language. If they can speak English, the English version of the label will be helpful.

Example 2. Tủ sách của thầy đồ = portable cabinet for candidates taking the Mandarin examinations

The translation of the concept ‘tủ sách của thầy đồ’ is really clear and easy to understand. ‘Candidates taking the Mandarin examinations’ fully expresses the meaning of ‘thầy đồ’. In addition to that, the word ‘portable’ also gives an explanation for ‘thầy đồ’.

Example 3. Nọc cấy = digging stick for transplanting rice seedlings.

Similar to the first example above, the translated version is also helpful to English-speaking readers from Vietnam, as the concept ‘nọc cấy’ is not easy to understand. By paraphrasing the concept, the translators have made it possible for the readers to catch the idea.

Other examples of this strategy include:

Trống châu = drum to accompany singing

Trống chiến = drum for martial music.

Bao gồm = receptacles for fired pottery by omission

In several translations, the translators have omitted some words or expressions. The reason might be that those words and expressions are not necessary in conveying the meaning of the items to the readers.

Example 1.

Ván khắc in nét đen = outline printing block

In this case, ‘đen’ is omitted as it is not vital in the whole expressions. Furthermore, the label is illustrated by the object itself, therefore, the translators can leave out the unnecessary words.

Example 2.

Kim gấp than = tongs

Xẻng xúc than = shovel

Vá hót bột = strainer

Muôi múc đồng = ladle

Nồi nấu đồng = cốt gang

Khuôn thạch cao và kèm lấy gồm mộc = mould and remover

All these labels are for the objects of traditional handicrafts by ethnic groups in Vietnam. Besides each group of objects is a text panel explaining clearly about one handicraft village. Therefore, it is not necessary for the translators to translate such words as ‘than’, ‘đồng’, ‘gốm’, etc. Without these words, still the targeted readers can catch the meaning of the labels.

Conclusion

It can be seen in the study that the translators have used a lot of strategies and procedures in translating the exhibit labels in the Vietnamese Museum of Ethnology to overcome the problem of non-equivalence at word level.

The study has also showed that though there are a lot of potential problems facing the translators such as non-equivalence, limited knowledge of Ethnology, differences between the two cultures. Nevertheless, they have come over those problems by using various strategies and techniques of translation.

However, we have found some problems in the translation of the exhibit labels due to the limited knowledge of the field. We have also given out some suggested translations for the labels.

Further study on this topic is needed to shed light on many issues which remain unsearched in this thesis. Further study should focus on the structural patterns of exhibit labels, different types of exhibit labels so as to make the study more thorough.

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SUB-THEME:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTERNATIONAL VIETTESOL CONFERENCE – A MEANINGFUL EVENT FOR VIETNAMESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

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Abstract

Professional development is a significant task to teachers in the era of exchanging information when students can have access to almost everything at the push of a button. Attending conferences to share teaching techniques and research results is one of the efficacious methods to learn from others and to widen the network of each participant for further cooperation and opportunities. Nonetheless, this seems to be familiar to Vietnamese teachers at tertiary level only, but not to the lower level. Therefore, the 1st International VietTESOL Conference was co-organised by Vietnam's National Foreign Languages Project 2020 and Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE), a leading university in education sector in Vietnam, on 9-10 December, 2014, in order to link teachers of English at all educational levels, ranging from primary to tertiary education within Vietnam nationwide together as well as with teachers and scholars in the region and in the world. In addition, VietTESOL Conference also creates a forum where teachers of English in Vietnam share their experience and learn from each other in terms of innovative practices and problem solutions so as to enhance their teaching and their research capacity.

This paper first affirms the importance of annually organizing the International VietTESOL Conference in Vietnam, afterwards, distinguishes the VietTESOL Conference from other similar conferences in terms of organization. The paper also shows some facts and figures about the 1st and the 2nd International VietTESOL Conferences and suggests some recommendations for further improvements of the upcoming VietTESOL Conferences.

Keywords: VietTESOL Conference, International Conference, teaching English.

Introduction

Since the first launch of The NFL 2020 Project, there have been a variety of activities implemented by the NFL 2020 Project to fulfill its tasks, such as short training courses both locally and overseas for teachers of English to enhance both their English capacity and teaching methodology and conferences among the teachers. These conferences, some of which are the National Conference “Solutions to Improve English-major Education Quality at Universities and colleges at Vietnam’s North-Western Area” at Tay Bac University, on 25 October 2014; the International ELT Conference “Building Capacity for English Language Teaching through Innovative Practices and Problem-Solving Strategies” held in Hai Phong, on 13 October 2013, the National ELT Conference “Improving Capacity and Teaching Methods for English Teachers in the North-Western Area” at Tay Bac University, on 27 September 2013, were conducted effectively as a means of professional development. Nonetheless, the hefty majority of the presenters at the conferences are tertiary lecturers who are skillful in presenting and attending conferences. Moreover, rarely do presenters have opportunity to take part in any post-conference activities. Therefore, the 1st International VietTESOL was initiated and proposed to the NFL 2020 Project. The proposal was approved and granted by National Foreign Language 2020 Project – so that the 1st International VietTESOL Conference was co-organized by HNUE and the 2020 Project. The paper explains the rationale and describes the organization of the 1st and the 2nd conferences. Afterwards, the paper suggests how to improve the upcoming VietTESOL conferences.

Rationale

The 1st conference is aimed to link English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals at all educational levels, from primary to tertiary education across and beyond Vietnam so as to achieve three major important specific goals. Never before do the teachers either from 63 provinces and cities in Vietnam nationwide or at various educational levels gather to attend any conferences. First, it enhances Vietnamese teachers’ capacity in teaching English and conducting research in the context of Vietnamese English learning. Regarding teachers from primary to high school education, they have opportunity to carry out the workshops to demonstrate and share their own teaching activities. Others can adjust to apply these activities into their teaching context. In addition, concerning teachers at high school education, it is feasible for them to get acquainted with doing research. Second, the conference creates a forum for not only Vietnamese but also international teachers of English share their experience and learn from each other in terms of innovative practices and problem solutions. The 1st conference connects the teachers and creates a forum for them to express their ideas continuously. Through the forum, they can get to know each

other and find research partners who have the same research interest. With these aforementioned purposes, VietTESOL International Conference is of great importance to the field of teaching and learning English in Vietnam. Therefore, it is supported wholeheartedly by HNUE and National Foreign Language 2020 Project. These people play a significant role in instructing in details the very first steps of a long-lasting journey and supporting the initiator so that she can realise the organising plan. Besides, a team of American Alumni made a remarkable contribution to forming the foundation of the 1st VietTESOL conference. In addition, Dr. Le Thuy Linh – a colleague at FOE, Director of Centre for Development Studies and Education, HNUE as well as Secretary of the Conference Organising Committee, Engaging with Vietnam Conference and Dr. Nguyen Thi Mai Huong – Division Convenor, Division of Teaching Methodology, FOE, HNUE are the people who are mostly in charge of the academic content of the 1st and 2nd conference, respectively. Ms. Jill Kester, M.A.T., Senior English Language Fellow 2013-2015, US State Department, National Foreign Languages Project 2020, along with other fellows, also makes great contribution to the 1st conference as a liaison, a presenter, a room chair, a consultant and a pre-conference orientation presenter whereas the 2nd conference receives a huge support from Ms. Jessica Carroll and others. Moreover, there are a large number of colleagues at FOE, HNUE take part in organising the conference enthusiastically and without them the conference would not have been of great success.

The logo



The logo and other designs such as backdrop, banner, and band roll were designed by an architect at PVV Joint Stock Company. The colour of the word Viet, as in the logo above, represents the colour of Vietnam's national flag. At the background are a boat and many cranes with the patterns that are sculpted on Dong Son bronze drum, the ancient drum symbolizing the Vietnamese culture. Particularly, the boat with these cranes is a traditional metaphor for the Vietnamese teachers who sail the boat with their students to pass the river of knowledge successfully. Hence, this logo is very meaningful and unique to the Vietnamese teachers of English.

The conference organization

1. The 1st Conference

The 1st International VietTESOL Conference was composed of four parallel sessions, compatible with four educational levels. The content of the papers was required to be in accordance with the particular contexts and textbooks of all levels so that the teachers attending the conference could have hands-on teaching experience to applying into their teaching.

As mentioned earlier, two formats of presentations were selected at the conference, namely workshop and paper presentation. Due to the limited scope of the 1st conference, there were only 4 rooms for workshop from primary to tertiary education with the intention that teachers attending the conference can have the most practical and useful experience for their teaching levels. In addition, paper presentation accounts for 2 rooms for high school and tertiary teachers. Each paper and workshop session lasts 30 and 60 minutes so that the presenters and audiences may discuss their interest topics at length.

Moreover, so as to increase the number of teachers participating the conference, the third format of poster presentation was added. However, the poster presenters did not have chance to present their posters which were designed only for display at the poster gallery. In reality, due to the narrow area of the conference space, the posters were finally shown on the slideshow through the overhead projector, to the regret of the organisers.

2. The 2nd Conference

Meanwhile, the 2nd conference is comprised of eight concurrent sessions based on four main sub-themes as follows:

Sub-theme 1: Media and technology in English language teaching and learning

- E-learning;
- Using media and technology in ELT;
- Exploiting Internet resources in ELT;
- Using social networks in English learning and teaching.

Sub-theme 2: Contemporary issues in English teaching and learning

- Developing English language skills and components;
- Classroom practicalities: testing and assessment, lesson planning, classroom management;
- Materials/ course design and development;
- Developing communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving skills, critical and creative thinking skills;
- Creativity in English classrooms;

- Teaching English to young learners;
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Sub-theme 3: Cultural issues in English language teaching and learning

- Cultural differences in English teaching and learning;
- Cultural awareness in ELT;
- Culturally responsive teaching.

Sub-theme 4: Professional development

- Reflective practice;
- Teacher learning;
- Teachers and learners' identities;
- Building communities of practice.

The presentation format stays the same as the 1st conference, including paper presentation, interactive workshop and poster gallery; however, the duration of the first two formats is shortened into 15 and 30 minutes to increase the number of presenters. As a result, there are 8 workshops and 72 paper presenters this year. Unlike at the 1st conference, the proceeding of the 2nd conference printed by the University of Education Publishing House has the full papers. More importantly, the official website of VietTESOL conference is designed and developed by ICT of HNUE so that the presenters and participants can register online and have access to related information about the conference more conveniently. Hopefully, this website may serve as a connection between teachers nationwide and link Vietnamese teachers with the international ones via its forum.

Conclusion and suggestions

To sum up, the VietTESOL International Conference is a worthwhile event which should be held annually for the sake of Vietnamese teachers of English given the precious support and permission of the Ministry of Education and Training and the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project.

The upcoming VietTESOL International Conferences can be more successful if the organisers have more time for the preparation process. To be more specific, first, the call for papers is likely to be released earlier not only within Vietnam but also beyond Vietnam; as a result, the teachers probably think of many ideas to select from for their Abstracts and spend more time writing the Abstracts and the full papers later. Second, when the conference organising committee has the contact of the English specialists who are responsible for all issues related to English teaching and learning at each Department of Education and Training nationwide, it might be more convenient to ask them to assign the delegates from primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels as the request in the

official document of the 2020 Project. Third, if the call for sponsor is conducted more professionally, there will be more grants for teachers from far-away or isolated areas to participate in the conference. Furthermore, the duration of the upcoming conferences can be lengthened into two days thus; more and more presenters may have the opportunity to exchange their ideas in teaching English. Fourth, the forum on the VietTESOL website needs to be run efficaciously so that the network created at the conference is likely to be maintained and expanded for on-going post-conference activities. Moreover, the teachers who do not have chance to attend the conference can have access to the conference proceedings. This may result in their inspiration to attend the following conferences or have reference materials to come up with the ideas and write their own abstracts and full papers.

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS IN THAI STUDENT ESSAY WRITING: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

English language ability has become essential in every context throughout Thailand, and a number of studies revealed writing skills as highly important (Stevens, 2005; Piriyaasilpa, 2014), but one of the most difficult for students to master (Chinnawongs, 2001; Padgate, 2008; Piriyaasilpa, 2012; Syananondh & Padgate, 2005). This case study investigated teachers' opinions of Thai students' English essay writing. After learning essay structure, students' written drafts were marked by ten teachers to assess their writing quality. A semi-structured interview was later conducted with the teachers to investigate the criteria used in their marking, attitudes towards students' writing and what they considered desirable characteristics in English essay writing. It was found that there was no difference in the teachers' marking, or their perspectives in terms of problems and desirable characteristics, though the marking of one teacher was clearly different from the others. The results from the semi-structured interview led to a discussion of implications for teaching an essay writing course.

Keywords: Academic Literacy, Discourse Community, English Essay Writing.

Introduction

The concept of discourse community (Swales, 1990) concerns a group of communicators with a common goal or interest adopting certain preferred ways of participating in public discussion. The variation of language used in different contexts is due to the requirements and expectations made by members of a social group, thereby reflecting the unique ways of communicating in different organisations. A good piece of writing is not only created to meet writing goals, but also an organisation's language requirements. It is, therefore, important that new-comers understand those requirements and use language knowledge to attain those expectations.

Drawing on that notion, this study set out to examine teachers' attitudes toward student writing, and obtain their opinion of student writing problems and the desirable characteristics of essay writing. The findings from the study will be used to develop the content and teaching materials of the English Essay Writing Course.

Methodology

The participants in this study were comprised of fifteen 3rd year students (2 males and 13 females, aged 20-22 years) who had majored in English at a Thai university, and ten teachers (5 Thais and 5 foreigners) from both the university where the research was undertaken (8 participants) and other outside institutions (2 participants) with experience in teaching writing courses. The student English language proficiency was rated lower intermediate to intermediate, and they were undertaking the English Essay Writing Course in the first semester of the 2014 academic. Table 1 below presents the details of the teaching participants with pseudonyms.

Table 1: Personal details of the teachers

No.	Name	Gender	Nationality	Level of education	Experience in teaching Thai students	Experience in teaching writing courses
1	JR	F	Thai	MA	3 years	1 year (English essay writing) 1 year (English report writing) 1 year (Paragraph writing)
2	LJ	F	Filipino	BA	2 years	2 years (Business letter writing)
3	LP	F	Thai	MA	38 years	12 years (Paragraph writing)
4	SG	M	British	MA	14 years	12 years (Writing for daily life, Business letter writing)
5	TT	M	British	MA	12 years	2 years (English essay writing)
6	TN	F	Thai	MA	20 years	3 years (Paragraph writing)
7	DK	M	British	MA	6 years	3 years (Writing for daily life)
8	SR	F	Thai	PhD	20 years	1 semester (English essay writing) 2 semesters (Paragraph writing)
9	TV	M	Dutch	MA	12 years	10 years (Writing for daily life, Writing for business purposes)
10	NP	F	Thai	PhD	16 years	16 years (English essay writing)

The research instruments used in this study included fifteen written drafts from students, teacher assessments of student writing levels, a semi-structured interview, and a textbook of the English Essay Writing Course.

The data collection process started with teaching the three main structures of an English essay: introductory paragraph, body, and concluding paragraph. The introductory paragraph entails general ideas or background information of the topic and the thesis statement; the body contains the arguments supporting the thesis; and the concluding paragraph draws a conclusion, summarises and re-affirms the thesis statement (Chin, Koizumi, Reid, Wray & Yamazaki, 2012).

After learning the essay structure, students composed their written drafts, which were, in turn, assessed by the teachers and sorted into different groups according to the levels of quality: good-excellent (80%-100%), moderate (60%-79%) and poor (0 – 59%). A semi-structured interview was later conducted to compare the teacher opinions of student writing problems and the desirable characteristics.

Teacher assessments of student-writing ability were analysed quantitatively in percentages and compared. Data from the semi structured interview were analysed qualitatively for the implication of further course content development and assessments.

Results

Fifteen participant drafts were assessed for their writing proficiency on the topic: *“it is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a big city. Do you agree or disagree?”*. The results showed that most teachers made similar assessments about the student writing quality. However, TV who is a foreign teacher from an outside institution came to clearly different judgements. For example, TV marked the writing drafts of most students (13 out of 15, 86.66%) as being of good to excellent quality while only two drafts (13.33%) were considered moderate. In TV’s opinion, none of the fifteen writing drafts were of poor quality. Of the two student drafts other teachers (93.33%) marked as being poor (S1 and S2), TV ranked them as good to excellent.

Consistent criteria were also set by the majority of teachers. That is, most of them focused on the use of language and grammar (90%) and content (70%) when marking student writing. Half the teachers also laid importance on essay organisation and writing mechanics. Nevertheless, TV’s criteria also differed by being the only teacher who focused on ‘readability’ and paragraph structure. Even when mistakes were found in student writing, when the criteria set were on ‘readability’, TV’s assessments remained positive.

As far as the desirable characteristics of students’ essay writing were concerned, the findings showed that there were no significant differences among the teachers. That is, many agreed that the desirable characteristics of a good essay include: goal/task

achievement (50%), strong use of language and grammar, supporting details, mechanics (40%), and essay structure (30%)

Finally, all teachers (100%) agreed that the students have language problems, specifically grammar. Half pointed to weaknesses in vocabulary use and logical reasoning, and some (40%) thought students failed to communicate ideas to reach the goal or task assigned.

Implications

Results from this study showed that most teachers (90%) focused on the use of language and grammar when assessing student writing and all pointed them out as mistakes repeatedly made by students. Even though most teachers were aware of these student problems when teaching, and they were the main focus when marking essays, it continued to be a difficulty for students, implying that additional activities or extra techniques should be employed to improve student skills in this area. Such activity could be, for example, the grammar clinic activity as set by Piriya Silpa and colleagues (see Piriya Silpa, Pandet, Noipa & Tewarakpitak, 2012), or the different methods of feedback as used in Bitchener's writing class (see Bitchener and Knock, 2008 & 2009).

Another implication which can be drawn is that marking students' writing quality is influenced by criteria individual teachers set, while desirable characteristics have less effect on their thinking. These criteria could be influenced by two main factors: teacher perception and teacher background.

Teacher perception towards student ability

One possible reason why TV made different assessments was due to awareness that the students are not native speakers. TV stated that by focusing on language structure and grammar, student marks would be deducted.

I have graded in relation to what I can expect from Thai university students. If it were native English speaking university students the scale would be moved substantially. But I used the same standard as I would for my students or even students at a university in Bangkok.

Meanwhile, JR and LP set a high expectation on the student writing because it was a third year English-majored group. According to JR, the writing drafts should be planned, well organised and ideas should be discussed logically; LP suggested that this group of learners are expected to be competent in language use; while LI only stated that she expected students to try harder. The differing teacher expectations imply that standard assessment rubrics should be provided based on teachers' expectations towards different groups of learners.

Teacher background

Another possible reason underlying different marking is teacher background. In this study, most (90%) were English teachers with experience in teaching English majored students. TV, however, is an English teacher responsible for teaching Marketing students. Teacher background could influence priorities when marking student work.

Maybe it is because of my business/economics background that I really prefer concise and clear communication over correct grammar, long sentences or use of difficult words.

This suggests that background or perception of teachers towards students and their writing abilities can influence assessment, and that it is important for teachers to set up communal criteria for marking, based on the subject focus and course description. The future development of the English Essay Writing Course should, therefore, include rubrics for assessment.

Conclusion

This study investigated teacher opinions of student writing skills based on a draft essay, and a follow-up interview exploring the problems and desirable characteristics of students' essay writing. It was found that most teachers have similar views about assessment, however, one teacher differed somewhat and that may be due to teacher perspectives about student language requirements and their own teaching background. The findings reveal implications for future development of the English essay writing course in the context of study or other English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning context, which may be addressed by including the activities discussed earlier.

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TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING THE USE OF L1 IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

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Abstract

Opinions concerning the use of the L1 in L2 learning have differed markedly over the years. For much of the past century, it has generally been asserted by theorists and methodologists that the L1 has a largely negative influence on L2 learning and that its use should therefore be kept to an absolute minimum in L2 teaching. However, in recent years this position has been called into question, leading to the beginnings of a reassessment of previous views and assumptions. The study was conducted to explore the beliefs and classroom practices regarding the use of Vietnamese by a group of seven teachers working in a high school in Vietnam. Drawing on the data obtained from interviews and classroom observations, the findings show that teachers held strong beliefs about the use of Vietnamese. They believed that the use of Vietnamese helped their students whose English was limited to understand grammar and vocabulary better. They also believed that an appropriate proportion of L1 use was 50% of the class time. Observational data revealed that there were similarities between their stated beliefs and practices despite few differences. The study concludes that L1 has a role in L2 learning and it is unrealistic to ban L1 in L2 classroom and that more attention should be given to the training of teachers in classroom language use as part of teacher professional programmes.

Introduction

The students' first language (L1) has been one of the controversial issues in the field of second language (L2) teaching. In the past many scholars, researchers and methodologists in the field of second language acquisition proposed that students learned their second language much in the same way that they learned their first, and that L2 was best learned through massive amounts of exposure to the language with limited time spent using L1 (Tang, 2002). However, in recent years, focus has been shifting towards inclusion of L1 in the language classroom. Many researchers and teachers have started to re-evaluate the role of L1 in the EFL classroom and think of ways to best incorporate it into EFL teaching. However, the issue is not adequately researched in Vietnamese high school contexts.

This motivates me to conduct this study. The study, stemming from the experiences above, attempts to investigate the beliefs and practices regarding the use of Vietnamese in the

teaching of English of a group of high school teachers working in a particular high school in a mountainous area of Bac Giang province.

1. Definition of teacher beliefs

One of the most important and interesting questions which researchers studying teaching behavior have sought to find out is why teachers teach the way they do. The answer to this question has taken scholars and researchers to the study of teacher beliefs. One general point to emerge from this research agenda is that the study of teacher beliefs is central to a better understanding of teachers' teaching practices.

An extremely important and difficult issue that researchers on teacher beliefs have to confront with is defining "beliefs". Pajares (1992: 313) explains that beliefs have been studied in different fields and therefore no specific definition has been adopted. According to M. Borg (2001: 186) a belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior.

This definition is adopted in this study. It is because teachers' beliefs influence their teaching practices that I decided to study not only how teachers of English in one high school used the Vietnamese in the English lessons but also the beliefs behind their practices.

2. The use of the L1

The L1, or mother tongue, "is the language which a person acquires in early years and which becomes his/her natural instrument of thought and communication (Atkinson, 1987: 43). In the field of EFL, the use of the L1 has been an issue of debate. Stern (1992: 279) described the role of the L1 in L2 teaching as "one of the most long-standing controversies in the history of language pedagogy". According to Littlewood and Yu (2011), there is still a lack of agreement on whether the students' L1 has a place in the classroom or, if it does, what that role is. Despite the ongoing theoretical debate, bilingual teachers, in their classrooms, still resort to L1 to teach the L2.

The Study

This study was conducted in a high school which is located in a mountainous area of Bac Giang province. There were eight teachers of English including the author of this study. The most experienced one had 13 years of teaching English to the high school students and the least experienced one had 5 years of teaching. The average class size was 40-45 students.

Participants (N=7) in this study were all the teachers of English in the school. Two of them are male. From my personal observation, all of them were responsible and dedicated teachers, who were always concerned about their students' learning outcomes.

Two instruments were used for collecting data for the study: interviews and classroom observations. First all the participant teachers were interviewed to articulate their beliefs about L1 use in teaching English. Then they were observed so that the consistence and inconsistency between their beliefs and practice could be identified.

Results

Concerning the frequency of L1 use in the classroom, teachers believed that there was no fixed formula, but they seemed to agree that an approximately 50-50 proportion was appropriate. An said that intuitively he thought that proportion was acceptable. He said, "There is no fixed proportion applicable to all students, and all types of lessons. I think that proportion is around 50-50." Another teacher said the use of classroom language should be varied not depending on the students, but depending on the lesson type.

For listening and speaking lessons, a percentage of 20 % for Vietnamese is OK whereas for reading and writing lessons, the percentage is around 30-40%. But Vietnamese should be used around 50% of the class time in teaching grammar.

Regarding the benefits of L1 use, teachers believed that it had two sides depending on the purpose of using L1. For example, one of them said,

The use of Vietnamese is both positive and negative. If the teacher uses Vietnamese exceedingly the students will have difficulty in listening to English and speaking English. But if we use only English, they will have difficulty in comprehending spoken English and understanding the meaning of words.

Observational data justified what they said. The frequency of their L1 use per lesson was shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency of L1 use per lesson

Teacher (pseudonyms)	Lesson focus	L1 use (minutes)	L2 use (minutes)
An	Language focus	6.0	4.5
	Writing	5.0	4.0
Kha	Speaking	10.5	8.5
	Listening	13.0	4.0
Minh	Speaking	8.0	4.0
	Reading	15.5	15.5
Mai	Speaking	15.0	6.0
	Listening	9.5	9.0

Regarding the purposes of L1 use, teachers tended to use L1 both in explaining grammar and in skill lessons. Because of the limited space, two lessons extracts were presented here. The first one is an extract of the ‘Language Focus’ lesson.

1. T: Now we move to the tenses <writes on the blackboard> Review of tenses.
2. T: Review? What does it mean?
3. T: Ôn lại thì của động từ. Cái này chúng ta đã học kỹ lắm rồi giờ tôi sẽ kiểm tra bạn nào nêu cho thầy các sử dụng thì hiện tại đơn có những cách nào nêu hết ra nhé bạn nào nêu cho thầy nào bạn nữ này nào.<points to a female student>
4. T: Hành động xảy ra thường xuyên, lặp đi lặp lại, sự thật hiển nhiên,, hành động tương lai trong các mệnh đề thời gian bạn nào lên viết cho thầy công thức thì hiện tại đơn bạn nữ đầu bàn 3 nào <points to a female student in the middle of the classroom; the student writes the formula on the blackboard>.

Another extract was from a speaking lesson.

1. T: I’m very happy to present you, today Ms Ngan attends our class the last lesson we studied the revision lesson, today we work on unit 1 so, open your book
2. T: Hôm trước chúng ta học bài ôn tập tiết 2, hôm nay chúng ta sẽ bắt đầu bài thứ nhất trong sách giáo khoa, các em mở sách.
3. T: Rất nhiều em không có sách. Giờ sau như thế thầy giáo cho đứng ngoài. Không có sách làm sao mà học được.
4. T: Now look at the picture at 12 and answer my questions what do you see in the picture.

Discussion

The study has shed light on our understanding of teacher beliefs about the use of L1 from several aspects. The group of teachers in this study appeared to recognize both positive and negative effects of L1. They did not differ from one another in their beliefs and practices in this regard. Usually teachers resorted to Vietnamese when they worried about their students’ understanding. However, the study reveals that L1 may also be inevitable in the L2 class, even when students have no difficulty in understanding.

The findings of the study are similar to many other previous studies in different contexts that teachers did use L1 in their L2 classes (Canh, 2014; Kim & Elder, 2008; Kang, 2008; Kim Anh, 2010). They held strong beliefs about the need and the benefits of using L1 in helping their students to comprehend their messages and the lesson content better. What the teachers said in the interviews showed that they were positive towards L1 use.

However, teachers’ stated beliefs and their actual practices differed in one aspect. They said that they used Vietnamese more in teaching grammar and lexis and more English in

skills lessons. The observational data showed that there was almost no difference regarding the amount of their use of Vietnamese in both types of lessons. It is worth noting that the teachers did use Vietnamese even when there was no sign of students having difficulty understanding English (Canh, 2014; Song, 2009).

Regarding the purpose of using Vietnamese, the findings of this study showed that teachers used Vietnamese largely to convey meaning (Cook, 2008), to explain grammar and vocabulary (Liu et. al., 2004; Littlewood & Yu, 2011), and possibly to create the constructive social relationship with the students (Littlewood & Yu, 2011).

Conclusion

The findings of the present study seem to suggest that teachers' use of L1 is quite natural. When the teacher shares the common L1 with the students, it is hard, if not impossible, to discourage the teacher from using the L1. It also appears that the full use of English may not always be beneficial to the students. Especially, considering the reality of large class size, mixed ability classes which constitute the perceived constraints in EFL settings across Asia (Carless, 2004), teachers would do the students much good by appropriately using L1 and target language for the purposes of maintaining classroom discipline and enhancing student comprehension, both of which could contribute to continued student interest. Therefore, the policy of teaching English through English in the context of Vietnamese high schools needs to be reconsidered.

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**THE STATED BELIEFS ABOUT AND REPORTED PRACTICES
IN VOCABULARY TEACHING OF EFL TEACHERS
AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM**

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Abstract

The present study examines how vocabulary teaching is represented in the lesson planning of early career English as foreign language (EFL) teachers in a university in Vietnam and the beliefs that underpin the practices. Analysis of data obtained from an online survey and the teachers' lesson plans reveals important themes related to vocabulary teaching and learning. Elaboration and explanations for the reported practices gained from semi-structured in-depth interviews allow for an insightful look into the participants' beliefs about the reported practices as well as contextual factors that influence their teaching. The results suggest that the participants hold interacting beliefs toward vocabulary teaching, with beliefs grounding on teaching experiences and teaching context having more influences on their practices. The participants could generally justify their practices, though their knowledge about vocabulary teaching and learning might not be complete. Besides echoing well-studied negative effects of contextual factors, the present study finds some potential positive impacts of the teaching context on vocabulary teaching and learning. A number of implications for teacher training programs and professional development programs are proposed based on the findings from the study.

Keywords: teacher cognition, EFL, vocabulary teaching.

Introduction

The wide recognition of teachers as “active, thinking decision-makers who play central roles in shaping classroom events” has led to the proliferation of studies into language teacher cognition, i.e. teachers' knowledge, thoughts and beliefs, and the relationship between their cognition and classroom practices. Teachers' beliefs are known to shape and guide instructional practices (Burns, 1992). Recent research has examined the mutual informing relationship between cognition and practices, stating that beliefs influence practices and through practices teachers adjust and change their beliefs (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Borg, 2003; Phipps & Borg, 2009).

In his review of research on language teacher cognition, Borg (2006) pointed to the limited scope of the studies in the field in the period from the mid-1990s to 2006. A substantial number of studies are concerned with teacher cognition in grammar and literacy, i.e. reading and writing at secondary and high school settings while tertiary level receives much less attention. It is, thus, suggested that teacher cognition in teaching of other skills at higher education is wide open to continuing research.

The present study aims to bridge the abovementioned gaps in research in both teacher cognition and vocabulary teaching and learning. It particularly focuses on the beliefs about and reported practices in teaching vocabulary of a group of EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam. The following research questions guided the project:

1. How are vocabulary learning and teaching represented in the lesson planning of early career EFL teachers in a university in Vietnam?
2. What underlying beliefs are suggested by these reported practices?

Research into teacher cognition and classroom vocabulary teaching and learning

In light of the emerging interest into the role of context in language teacher cognition and practice and the bi-directional relationship between cognition and classroom practices, the present study combines the broad definition of cognition proposed by Borg (2006) and the definition put forward by Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis (2004). Accordingly, language teachers' beliefs are highly personal and context-sensitive statements which are expressed as evaluations of what should be done and what is preferable.

Documented studies on teacher cognition in vocabulary teaching yield findings about beliefs and practices in vocabulary teaching which are consistent with well-grounded theory in the field. One of the most commonly discussed themes is the influence of prior language learning experience on the way teachers plan and deliver vocabulary teaching. Tension between cognition and practices is another important finding in the field. In his longitudinal case study of two EAP teachers, Nural (2014) discovers that the participants experienced different level of consistency and inconsistency (tensions) between their espoused beliefs and classroom practices. Recent studies echo one another regarding the influences of contextual factors on the vocabulary planning and teaching. Researchers also find that teachers hold different beliefs and practices in vocabulary teaching.

Methodology

In exploring and describing the knowledge about and reported practices in vocabulary teaching of the participants, a mixed method design was adopted in this two-phase study. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were employed. 33 pre-service and beginning teachers were recruited for the online survey. The pre-service

teachers have just finished their practicum and were then in the last two months of their four-year ELTE program. Of the lesson plans collected from the participants, 25 were used for data analysis. These lesson plans were prepared for the practicum and mentoring program for pre-service and beginning teachers respectively.

For the second phase of the study, five (three pre-service and two beginning teachers) were invited to participate in the follow-up semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the online survey and the analysis of the lesson plans were analyzed separately and then integrated to provide the initial findings that informed the follow-up interviews.

Research question 1: How is vocabulary learning and teaching represented in the lesson planning of early career EFL teachers in a university in Vietnam?

Research question 1 concerns how vocabulary teaching and learning was represented in the lesson plans of the teachers. Overall, the results show that vocabulary was attended to in the lesson but it was not considered a priority. Vocabulary was largely regarded as a means to help the students comprehend the content of the lesson. The fact that the students were expected to engage in content-based activities such as discussion and forum after reading some passages required the teachers to sacrifice thorough teaching of new words to spend more time on explaining and discussing the content of the lessons. Similarly, helping students to practice and sharpen four language skills and exam taking skills were considered more important goals of the lessons than teaching vocabulary. These findings partially resonate with Macalister’s (2012) study on vocabulary and cognition of pre-service EFL teachers. In his study, when asked about the objectives of their imagined lessons i.e. Language, Ideas, Skills, Text, or the mnemonic LIST (Nation & Newton, 2008), the most common response was content learning and teaching or Ideas, followed by Language, either grammar or vocabulary.

Table 1: Number of explicit planned vocabulary teaching and learning opportunities

Lesson	Number of EPVOs	Number of lesson plans	Average number of EPVOs/lesson
Reading-Writing	62	29	2.14
Listening- Speaking	29	20	1.45

The dataset also indicates that the teachers tended to choose new words that appeared in the texts and those they defined “key items” or “difficult items” to teach. The analysis of the lesson plans reveals a stronger focus on teaching receptive knowledge than productive knowledge among the teacher participants. While covering different aspects of vocabulary such as meaning, pronunciation, spelling and word formation, the participants did not seem

to provide enough opportunities for their students to productively apply what they learnt. When it comes to teaching new words, three specific techniques, i.e. use of L1 translation, use of games and presenting new words in semantic sets and thematic sets, were reported to be used extensively.

Table 2: Criteria for selection of new words to teach

Responses	Mean	SD
The word appears in a text the students are going to read or listen to	31.92	21.47
The word is unusual or rare	11.47	16.99
The word is typically problematic for learners like these	13.31	9.75
The word is used very frequently	10.64	7.92
The students asked about this word	9.14	6.35
The word offers a good opportunity to teach a vocabulary learning strategy	11.39	7.64
The word is useful in the classroom	11.61	10.36
Others (students make spelling mistakes with)	1.2	4.55

Research question 2: What underlying beliefs are suggested by these reported practices?

The qualitative data from the interviews suggests that the teachers in the present study held interacting beliefs toward the role of vocabulary and vocabulary teaching. Though they were aware of the importance of vocabulary in language learning, their winning beliefs were that there were more important objectives than expanding their students' vocabulary to reach in a lesson. Regarding their vocabulary teaching practices, the teachers did not always share the same reasoning and decision-making with each other. For some practices, the teachers seemed to have superficial and limited knowledge about the educational effects of what they conducted, which might undermine the effectiveness of an activity or even hinder their student learning. The study also casts light on some positive effects of contextual factors on vocabulary teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, some practical implications can be proposed. First of all, it is advisable to better equip prospective teachers with research-based understanding of vocabulary teaching and learning. A specific module for vocabulary acquisition or "How to teach vocabulary" should be included in teacher training programs' syllabus. Explicating

existing “myths” (Folse, 2004b) over vocabulary teaching and learning is particularly practical to inexperienced teachers like those in the present study. Therefore, it would be helpful if teacher educators and course designers for teacher training program incorporate this content into teacher training programs. For beginning teachers, sharing of first-hand experiences with fellow teachers and experienced teachers can help them avoid pedagogical mistakes.

It would also be helpful to raise teachers’ awareness of contextual factors that directly and indirectly impact their teaching. Building up the habit of considering all such factors as characteristics of learners, lesson objectives and targeted words would help teachers make informed instructional judgment and decision as well as perform principled teaching.

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EVALUATION OF TEAM TEACHING IN AN ESP COURSE FROM AN INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Recent complaints about the low quality of teaching in English as a foreign language course in Vietnam and Vietnamese learners' limited English proficiency have spurred both teachers and educational experts to search for effective measures to solve these problems. In the international context, team teaching has been suggested as one of the most beneficial teaching models to improve the quality of English teaching, and improve learners' English proficiency. This study was conducted in order to evaluate a pilot team teaching project involving a native English-speaking teacher and four Vietnamese teachers of English at both the People's Police University and the People's Police Academy. The teachers and students involved in the four pilot team-taught classes were asked to give feedback on team teaching via a questionnaire, teaching diary and informal interview. The findings from the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data indicated that the pilot team teaching project exposed both the strengths and drawbacks in terms of the effectiveness of the lessons and the teachers' professional development. Additionally, recommendations for administrators and team-teachers were made in the hope of maximizing the benefits while minimizing the weaknesses of team-teaching.

Introduction

With the development of regional integration and global participation, increasing the quality of education is becoming an urgent need for the Ministry of Education and Training as well as the government. Since the Vietnamese government sees the quality of teachers as the main/most important factor in improving education, it is setting targets for the revision of curricula and teaching methods in all educational establishments. There have been many education workshops, conferences, research studies conducted by many universities in order to help teachers maintain high performance in their teaching career and encourage them to pursue life-long learning which is vital to their professional development. To ensure this ongoing professional growth, teachers-as professionals-should constantly improve themselves. Teachers' professional growth is necessary to cope with the ever-expanding knowledge base in their subject matter and pedagogy, the rapidly changing social contexts of schooling, and the increasingly diverse needs of their students. EFL (English Foreign Language) teachers are not exempt from this professional responsibility. In short, teachers have to be viewed as learners - *"the teacher as life-long*

learner” and they need to learn together. Teachers today experiment with many approaches to professional development such as: self-evaluation, portfolio collections, classroom observation and performance assessment, peer assessment, keeping a teaching journal, peer coaching, mentoring, and doing action research. Of these, team-teaching seems to be very effective in enhancing teachers’ professional growth, though for many teachers, team-teaching remains unexplored territory.

Although team-teaching is not new and is already being used in many schools around the world, it is an experimental approach at my university. With the knowledge and experienced gained from the Training of Trainers (TOT) course sponsored by the US Embassy in which team-teaching was introduced as a new way to improve the quality of teaching English for specific purposes, I decided to conduct a study on: “***Evaluation of team teaching in an ESP course from an insider’s perspective***” to investigate and explore the points of view, feelings and attitudes of team-teachers and students towards team-teaching.

Literature review

1. Key terms and key concepts

1.1. Defining team teaching

Team teaching is achieved by two or more teachers sharing the responsibility and instruction to the same students at the same time (Vaughn, Schumm, & Arguelles, 1997). The heart of team teaching is not in details of the structure and organization but more in the essential spirit of cooperative planning, constant collaboration, close unity, unrestrained communication, and sincere sharing. Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001) pointed out that team teaching is not only teaching together. They identified three phases of team teaching: pre-instructional planning, instructional in-class teamwork, and post-instructional follow-up work. The term ‘*team teaching*’ should not be mistaken for ‘*co-teaching*’. Co-teaching occurs when two or more educators co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess a group of students with diverse needs in the same general education. Team teaching is just one model of co-teaching, exactly the highest level of co-teaching. There are six main models of team teaching as follows: traditional team teaching, collaborative teaching, complimentary or supportive team teaching, parallel instruction, differentiated split class, and monitoring teacher (Robinson & Schaible, 1995). By chance, the team teaching in the study was the combination of the first three models. In traditional team teaching, the teaming teachers actively share the instruction of contents and skills to all students. In collaborative teaching, the teachers work together in designing the course and teach the materials not by the usual monologue, but rather by exchanging and discussing ideas and theories in front of the learners who often work in pairs or groups. The complimentary or supportive team

teaching occurs when one teacher is responsible for teaching the content to the students and the other is in charge of providing follow-up activities.

1.2. Teaching evaluation

According to Fleischman and Williams (1996), the process of teaching evaluation involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information about teaching and learning in order to measure the effectiveness of teaching. The evaluation can focus on different aspects of teaching and learning to motivate modification in teaching through reflective practice.

The principles of teaching evaluation recently suggested by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan are useful references. Firstly, the use of multiple methods involving multiple sources of data is highly recommended. Next, the criteria for effective teaching should be determined before the criteria for teaching evaluation. The teachers should be involved in the process of making evaluation criteria. Finally, teaching evaluation systems should be flexible to accommodate diversity in instructional methods. Effective teaching evaluation must be individualized or localized. This principle was supported by Naoki Fujimoto, Tokyo University of Science, Suwa, in his journal '*Localizing Team-Teaching Research*' for Asian EFL Journal.

There is not a standard system for teaching evaluation under all circumstances. Therefore, evaluators develop their own evaluation criteria based on their own purposes of evaluation and specific setting of EFL teaching and learning. Generally, the assessment of the quality of classroom instruction and learners' achievement are the central elements of teaching evaluation. The classroom performance can be assessed based on the following criteria applied at the People's Police University (PPU):

1. Clear explanation of the objectives for the lesson;
2. Good instruction for group interaction and individual student interaction, and encouragement of class discussions;
3. Good relations with students;
4. Reasonable board presentation, clear handwriting, and suitable voice projection;
5. Appropriate use of teaching equipments to the lesson;
6. Precise, systematic, and adequate contents and content presentation;
7. Good combination of teaching methods

1.3. Characteristics of effective team teaching

An effective team teaching identifies a range of characteristics related to effectiveness of the lesson and the teachers' professional development.

Here are the criteria for lesson evaluation generalized by Ur (1996) after consulting a number of EFL teachers:

1. The learners were active all the time.
2. The learners were attentive all the time.
3. The learners enjoyed the lesson, were motivated.
4. The class seemed to be learning the material well.
5. The lesson went according to plan.
6. The language was used communicatively throughout.
7. The learners were engaging with the foreign language throughout.

In the other words, an effective lesson often involves the above features. Moreover, there must be the recognition of learners' educational progress since the most important objective of teaching is always to improve learners' competences. In addition, distinctively, effectiveness of a team-taught lesson relies on the collaboration of teaming teachers in not only presenting but also planning, processing, and problem solving (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; Smylie, 1995; Knezevic & Scholl, 1996). Goetz (2000) reinforced the decisive contribution of planning, which involves teaming teachers' discussions over goals of the course, learners' needs, roles of each teacher, modifications of teaching materials and teaching contents, to the success of team-taught lessons.

Methodology

1. Setting of the study

The study was conducted in the English course for the administrative police students to develop students' language competence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing; also to improve students' vocabulary for police field at the basic level so that they can communicate fluently in everyday situations and some simple professional ones. The six-week course covered five units of the course book "English for Administrative Police Officers" developed by English Language Faculty at the People's Police Academy and People's Police University with the support from the U.S Embassy.

2. The participants of the study

2.1. Teachers

Five participants making up four pairs of team-teachers from the People's Police University (PPU), People's Police Academy (PPA) and an English specialist from the American Embassy.

2.2. Students

The second group of participants is one English class of 30 students, which were selected randomly from the whole cohort. Their English levels rank from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate. They all had no experience of team-taught lessons.

3. Data collection instruments

3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used for collecting students' reflections on the pilot team teaching because this is the best way to get the responses from the whole class. The contents of the question items were designed based on the theoretical knowledge about teaching evaluation, characteristics of effective team teaching, then modified to suit the objectives of research. The video records of the team-taught lessons were offered to students as the supplements for their responses to the questionnaire.

3.2. Teaching diary

The second instrument, teaching diary, required much cooperation from the teaming teachers. The teachers were asked to remain a teaching diary, in which they noted down all information related to their team teaching including the preparation, lesson instruction, assessment, and teaching evaluation. The teachers both self- reflected their work and that of their partner. They were there together, teaching and observing each other. References related to team teaching and teaching evaluation were supplied to guide the teachers' reflections.

3.3. Informal interview

This research instrument supported the two above data collection instruments to clarify the findings with the questionnaire and teaching diaries through emails, yahoo chats, or discussions in person for clarifications. This offered participants the chance to expand their responses, making the information from the questionnaire and teaching diaries more reliable and profound. The researcher found this source much useful to complete the study.

Findings and discussions

1. Research question 1: What are the strengths of the team teaching in the pilot team-taught lessons?

1.1. The effectiveness of the team-taught lessons

Students' involvement in team-taught lessons

In general, the team-taught lessons were considered effective by the participants as shown in student questionnaires and teaching diaries as well as personal interviews.

According to the findings from the questionnaire, most of the students were positively involved in the team-taught lessons. 83% of the class was attentive during the lessons. The students admitted that it was normally so difficult for them to remain their concentration during four 55-minute periods each day of English study. During the pilot study, they felt interested in the lessons; actively participating in the activities '*prevent[ed] us from falling asleep or out of mind*'. Most of the students (93%) were motivated. Confidently, the students (77%) kept natural interactions with their classmates and teachers, mostly in English. Two teachers with their difference in personalities, cultures, and teaching styles made students curious about their collaboration. Consequently, students became more interested in their team-taught lessons.

Students' reflections on team-taught lessons

With the focus on communication skills, a variety of activities based on the real situations or authentic materials created a motivational and friendly learning environment. The students acknowledged the improvement not only in their learning environment but also in their language skills. Four main skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - were cleverly attached to each unit so that students received necessary knowledge and got appropriate practices for natural communication in English.

Students' reflections on their educational progress in team-taught lessons

The lessons were presented systematically with elastic collaboration of the two teachers. With two teachers there, the students said that they got more support and attention. Although there were not any formal records related to their marks for the confirmation of the students' progress in English proficiency, most of the students felt quite sure about that through the comments like: '*My English is better*', '*I can speak more fluently*', '*I learnt a lot*' and so on.

Surprisingly, all the students paid attention to the leadership of the teachers in the classroom. 80% of the respondents agreed that their teachers changed the leading role regularly and this change was good for them. It was beneficial since the students can acquire different learning and communication strategies from both teachers. Many students showed their admiration to the way two teachers co-operated in the classroom:

The students got the consistent feedback for their performances. 86% found that the teachers often referred to each other before making decisions. Two teachers said that they agreed on how to evaluate students while planning for the lessons and specific tasks. Whenever something unplanned came up, they quickly and cleverly spent little time during the short break or while the students were engaged in performing the tasks to get the agreement on the evaluation criteria. If there was something turning out in a different way from one teacher, the other would respect, not interrupt cruelly. '*Let it be!*' was their slogan.

In addition, in order to make their communication in class smoothly, the two teachers gradually developed their set of communication ways in the classroom, which might be understood only by two teachers. They both felt excited at their own system of communicative signals, which was helpful to remain their collaboration in the classroom.

1.2. The teachers' professional development

The process of their professional development shown in both teaching diaries and personal interviews was generalized as follows:

- Planning the lessons, developing tasks to make the teaching more effective in order to achieve specific learning objectives;
- Observing how to implement different teaching methods and teaching styles;
- Observing ways of relating to the students, giving encouragement, showing approval or disapproval of students performance, and motivating students;
- Observing classroom management of the other teacher;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of lessons;
- Giving comments on each other's teaching;
- Discussing what worked for the students and how to change to make the students' learning more effective;

They have their own strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Team teaching is a good chance for both to teach and observe, then learn from each other. This viewpoint is practical to two teachers of the study since they are distinctively different from each other as mentioned in the description of the participants of the study. When working together, they learnt from the strengths and weaknesses of their partners; which is clearly exposed in their teaching diaries and clarified in personal sharing with the researcher. More regularly mentioned was the knowledge and teaching techniques each teacher learnt from the partner. The teachers themselves got a number of benefits from their team teaching; which was thoroughly shown in their notes in their teaching diaries and personal sharing. The professional development was the most valuable to the teaming teachers. The findings prove that the team teaching was a success. It was beneficial to the students and teachers in specific ways.

2. Research question 2: What are the drawbacks of the team teaching in the pilot team-taught lessons?

In spite of the confirmation of a number of strengths as mentioned above, the pilot team teaching exposed some drawbacks. The results of the questionnaire presented mostly positive feedbacks from students. However, there were still some complaints which were interpreted from the responses to the statements of the previous parts.

2.1. Team teaching's negative impacts on learners' learning

First of all, 46 % of the students admitted that they sometimes felt unsure and confused due to the teachers' different opinions on the same issue. Traditionally, Vietnamese students are familiar with getting the fixed answers from the teachers and relying on them without questioning. For the first time, they approached a new perception of learning. There may be things we cannot judge true or false, wrong or right. There may be not one answer but multiple answers. They needed time to get used to the new perception; naturally, they got confused at first. The similar responses were found about the mobile learning environment with negative responses accounting for 43%. This inconsistency in the responses of the students shows that they were still moving from the traditional passive learning into more active learning.

There were also other drawbacks reflected by the students. 23% of the students felt distracted by the inappropriate interactions between the teachers. Another student said that two teachers occasionally discussed something while she was working; which made her lose the concentration on her task.

The teachers added some limitations of their team teaching. Both agreed that team teaching cannot become successful without appropriate time on planning. More time on preparation supposes more chances to team teaching effectively. However, the arrangement for personal discussions seemed to be troublemaking to both. In addition, they said that it was extremely difficult for them to control their differences so that the students could not be affected. They both confessed this trouble in their teaching diaries. Those drawbacks are predictable as the potential problems of team teaching. It is inferred from the findings that these limitations can be controlled with more considerations.

2.2. Pedagogical suggestions

In this section, the researcher presents her suggestions for further team teaching effectively. Based on the findings and the interpretations of the findings, she suggests that selecting team members, the planning process, and team leadership are essential factors for the success of team teaching.

2.3. Selecting team members

The centre of team teaching is the teaming teachers, so how to select team members is important. Whoever gets the idea and organizes team teaching - administrators or teachers, teaming needs thorough considerations. The members of the team may not share similar teaching methods or teaching styles; their differences are even preferable. If they are the same, then in their team-taught lessons, students feel like working with one teacher, which ruins the potential benefits of team teaching. The teaming teachers should be different in teaching methods, teaching styles, and personalities, but they have to share similar

philosophies about learning and students. They are encouraged to remain their distinctiveness during their collaboration. For this suggestion, team-teaching is highly recommended since their differences are natural and the benefits of cross-cultural environment and communication are apparent. Another thing to remember is that partners with big gaps in ages and experiences may cause trouble. Socially, it is rather difficult to set up the parity between them when junior teachers tend to withdraw themselves working with their seniors and versus.

In addition, since their relationship outside the classroom often influences their team teaching, it is ideal to select partners with good relationships. The teaming should be voluntary rather than compulsory. The teachers are human, not robots. We cannot expect them to work together well in a team even though they do not like each other.

2.4. Planning

As the agreement of both teachers, planning is essential for the success of team teaching. Teaming teachers need to work together to analyze their individual strengths and weaknesses as well as to determine how these features respectively can be exploited and limited within specific contexts. They have to discuss in which way their differences in teaching styles or teaching methods are mostly contributive to students' learning. They also work out how to facilitate each other as well as to improve their partner's skills in various areas (voice projection, articulation, pacing, giving instructions, teacher-student interaction, and so on).

During the process of planning, teachers set goals for the course. With mutual agreements, they can start considering the course book or available teaching materials and make the adaptation and modification in order to suit the learning and teaching goals. The planning occurs at any place and anytime, in the meeting, lunch break, period break; in person or via email or phone calls. More time do the teaming teachers spend on planning, more chances do they get for successful team teaching. However, the teachers should be flexible in class since the expected setting and students may be changed; and some modifications are necessary in time.

2.5. Leadership

It is ideal to ensure the parity between teaming teachers, but the unbalance in their roles in class is natural, unavoidable. Therefore, it is practical and useful to discuss how to set up the leadership frankly. Teaming teachers have to discuss about their roles in each task before the lesson carefully. The leadership makes one teacher work as a leader and another as a supporter. Teaming teachers assign the leadership based on their own strengths in delivering specific lesson contents. A good team teaching requires partners to change their leadership regularly. The case in which one teacher addresses the class while the other stands idly by is not acceptable for team teaching. Ideally, both partners take an active part,

to a greater or less extent in all aspects of the teaching, not fall into a rigid pattern of acting/teaching in terms of leadership.

Conclusion

1. Summary of findings and discussions

The pilot team teaching was proved effective in questionnaire, teaching diaries, and personal interviews. Both the teachers and the students acknowledged the increase in the effectiveness of the lesson thanks to the excellent collaboration of the team teachers. Even though no formal measurement, in form of scores in the exam for example, was recorded, the students recognized the progress in their English proficiency. The teachers appreciated their professional development thanks to their teamwork. Whereas, some drawbacks mostly related to the collaboration of the teachers as well as the learning environment were reported by the participants. These drawbacks negatively affected the lesson and all involved people including both the teachers and the students.

In conclusion, the benefits of team teaching far outweighed its negative impacts since it got high supports of all the participants and its drawbacks could be probably managed. All the participants stated that they wished more chances to experience team-taught lessons. The teachers confirmed without doubt that they have achieved a lot during such a short time of teaching together. They believed that this model of teaching was beneficial to their students' learning. With appropriate time and arrangement, along with some necessary changes, their team teaching must be more effective.

2. Limitations of the study

One obvious limitation is its lack of information in teaching evaluation. Whereas, she had to provide the participants with necessary documents for their reliable evaluation. The evaluation would be clearer and more systematic if only she got more official criteria for evaluating EFL team teaching. The study is only objective to the working place of the researcher with small amount of participants; therefore, the generalization, one characteristic feature of most research, is omitted.

3. Recommendations for further studies

Since the popularity of team teaching and studies related to team teaching are insufficient in Vietnam's EFL teaching, more studies in the future are called by the researcher. According to the findings in the study, it is predicted that team teaching will be the promising choice in Vietnam because of its outstanding benefits to both teachers and learners. However, it is a costly and complicated process and its limitations are potential, careful studies are required before any full practices or applications.

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