



Evaluating the Situation of Applying Learner-Centred Approach at a University in Hanoi

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to point out the status of teaching and learning English in the approach of learner-centred at a university in Hanoi when starting credit training and proposing new teaching methods that is suitable for the subject. The research is based on the actual survey of teachers' teaching as well as the learning of students at the school. The results reveal that although both teachers and students are used to traditional teaching and learning method, the new approach has proved a significant advancement in improving the motivation and study results.

Keywords: learner capacity, teaching methods, learner-centred, motivation, competency

1. Introduction

To meet the requirements of teaching under the credit system, innovating teaching and learning methods for each specific subject is extremely necessary, especially English. However, that innovation does not have to be carried out arbitrarily or hastily, but requires long-term orientation. When innovating teaching methods, teachers need to base on many factors to find appropriate changes such as: the school's training purpose, training program, physical conditions, and specific characteristics of subjects, psychological characteristics of students, and training majors. [5]

2. Analyze the current situation of teaching and learning English subjects at the University.

2.1. About the course outline:

At our University, English subjects are divided into two main groups: General English (GE) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). GE is taught right from the first year and applies to students throughout the school, with 2 credits in semester 1 (equivalent to 36 periods), 3 credits in semester 2 (equivalent to 50 periods) with the goal of teaching students' communication skills. ESP is taught in the second or third year (depending on the major) after students has completed 2 GE modules. In fact, the goal of the ESP training program is determined not to focus on specialized knowledge but on English language knowledge in the specialized field. Students having certain specialized knowledge will help both the instructor (e.g., in the interpretation of terms) and the learner (e.g., in the understanding of the terms) during the training process.

However, at the University, the number of credits for ESP courses is not uniform. The students at Accounting Department only takes 1 ESP course with a duration of 3 credits, while the remaining departments in the school take 2 courses of 2 credits each. As for students majoring in Business Administration, they take two additional TOEIC courses of 2 credits each, the reason why the output standard for students majoring in Business Administration is 550 TOEIC points while that of other faculties is 500 TOEIC points.

2.2. About teaching methods

Teaching and learning foreign languages plays an important role in helping to train human resources to meet the requirements of innovation and international integration. Recognizing the position and role of Foreign Languages in Universities, teachers have always tried to overcome difficulties, successfully completing the task, especially in the current period, the implementation phase of the Project "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system in the period 2008 - 2020" (for short, the Foreign Language Project National 2020), contributing significantly to the overall training career of the School.

In the process of teaching foreign languages, teachers is the organizer of building a language environment for learners to practice. This requirement must closely resemble the natural language environment in which teachers must be a direct object for learners to simulate. Therefore, each teachers needs to

have: deep professional knowledge and good language skills; ability to organize teaching classes and ability to practice education; cultivated style and humble, gentle personality; modern and systematic language knowledge; knowledge of foreign language teaching and learning. To do this, teachers need to be able to practice: speak fluently, pronounce clearly, know how to combine words with actions to express feelings; know how to simulate the speech characteristics and intonation of characters in different situations in life.

2.3 About the characteristics of students at the University

In recent years, students have had an average entrance exam score compared to the top 2 schools and is relatively uniform across majors and courses. Reality shows that students at the University mainly come from small provinces and rural areas. Most of them have similar cognitive levels but different learning motivations, and have a common characteristic of being weak in foreign languages. This has a great impact on teachers' teaching activities, and it is difficult to avoid limitations in the quality of learning.

3. Applying some new teaching methods - Results and assessment

3.1. Groupwork

3.1.1. Content and implementation method

In the process of implementing credit-based subjects, group work hours are used as a form of teaching organization to train and develop students' collaborative working skills, positive thinking, and sense of responsibility. teachers, overcoming the shortcomings in total teaching, total learning and individual teaching. [4]

Characteristics: The class is divided into study groups with a reasonable number of students in each group; Learning content and tasks are divided into problems assigned to groups to perform. Depending on the objectives and subject content, groups can receive the same or different tasks and work under the guidance and direction of teachers.

We have applied this method to students majoring in Human resource management, semester 6 of the 2022-2023 school year, and have gone through the following steps:

- Step 1: Assign the problem

Due to the large class size (50 students), the number of students in each group is quite large, 10 students. Each group will be in charge of one research content. This research students is conducted in both Vietnamese and English.

Step 2: Groups receive tasks and proceed to solve problems

To ensure a harmonious working atmosphere, we let each group choose its own team leader, then ask the team leader to draw topics and plan assignments (in writing) for each member with responsibilities, tasks, completion time, reference sources, and planned group meeting schedule.

Step 3: Evaluate group work results

After the group finished presenting, we asked the remaining students in the class to ask questions to test the knowledge of the students group, and also through that to evaluate the students' ability to defend their views in the right direction. openly and transparently in front of the class.

3.2. Develop communication skills through Speaking classes applied to General English

3.2.1. Content and implementation method:

To accomplish this part requires teachers to invest a lot of time and effort because this is the most difficult part in teaching foreign languages with a large class of students like our school. According to Byrne (1991), there are three stages of promotion students' speaking ability: presentation phase, practice phase and production phase. [2]

*** Presentation phase**

During this stage, teachers select and find speaking topics suitable to the lesson content and students' level; Give clear instructions and expectations for each exercise. At this stage, students play a passive role: just listening, trying to understand teachers' instructions and saying almost nothing (if they do speak, they say very little).

*** Practice phase**

Students relies on requests to practice various speaking activities (role plays, interviews, picture descriptions, discussions, etc. Students practice speaking most of the time individually, in pairs, in groups under the control of teachers . Teachers mainly corrects pronunciation errors, grammatical errors and word suggestions for students.

*** Production phase**

Teachers calls individuals or pairs, groups of students to present speaking practice as required.

3.2.2. Exciting activities for students learning Speaking skills

When referring to Teaching Speaking, authors such as Byrne (1986) and Bailey, K.M. (2005) has proposed a number of activities that can be effectively applied during speaking lessons.

Games

According to Byrne (1986), a game is a form of activity that has rules, has a purpose and must create excitement for participants. The purpose of games in teaching English speaking is to promote communication skills using English. However, games should only take up part of class time. Games can be played at the beginning of the hour to make studying interesting for students; In the middle of the day, help students practice and practice the use of language; at the end of class to both reduce stress and help students consolidate what they have learned.

Role play

Byrne (1991) identifies that 'role-play' is an activity that uses speaking skills, in which participants will put themselves in another person's position, or remain in their own position but put themselves in another person's position. a hypothetical situation. The purpose of 'role-play' is to organize students to practice certain behaviors in an imaginary situation.

An outstanding advantage of this activity is that it can also be used as an alternative assessment method to test students' speaking ability. In reality, each pair or group of students will handle the situation in its own way. Teachers allows groups to prepare situations within a certain time, then each group presents, the remaining groups will evaluate according to the criteria or scale given by teachers.

Conduct Interviews

Students can conduct interviews on given topics with other students in the class. teachers provide students with topics so they know what questions they can interview or instructions for them to follow, but it's best for students to prepare their own interview questions. After the interview, students will narrate their interview work to the class. It is clear that conducting interviews will give students the opportunity to develop their speaking abilities.

Picture Describing

For this activity, students can form groups and each group is asked to describe different pictures. students will discuss the picture with the rest of the group and a representative from each group will describe the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters students' creativity and imagination as well as public speaking skills.

Discussion

Author Bailey, K.M. (2005), in the article 'Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking', suggests that after each lesson, discussions can be held for different reasons. For example, students can aim for a conclusion, share ideas about an event or find solutions in their discussion groups. Therefore, before discussing, teachers must clearly state the purpose of the discussion activity. This will prevent students from chatting with each other about unrelated topics.

Story telling

Students may be asked to briefly summarize a narrative or story they heard from someone before, or they may create their own stories to tell to their classmates. Storytelling skills will promote students' creative thinking, helping them express ideas in the form of beginning, development and ending.

4. Results of the subject assessment questionnaire survey:**4.1. Survey for students:**

After finishing teaching the ESP subject for students in the first semester of the 2022-2023 school year, in order to collect information to serve as a scientific research topic, and at the same time, based on the objective opinions of students to see To learn from experience in innovating teaching methods in the following semesters, we distributed subject evaluation surveys to students majoring in Human Resource Management. The total number of ballots distributed was 150, 150 ballots were received. Below are the specific results as follows:

- Not all students have the same feelings about teachers' capabilities and classroom organization. Besides the students who give good reviews, there are still students who think that the role of students is not very good. This may be because teachers' own performance is not very good, it may also be due to the interaction between teachers and some students not being really close during the teaching process, and it may also come from subjective feelings. of students... Whatever the reason, teachers needs to review and improve so that the interaction between teachers and learners can take place more effectively.

- This shows that students are very active in opportunities to express themselves, give personal opinions, and participate directly in the learning process. Furthermore, these are all methods that stimulate students' thinking and problem analysis, helping them improve their ability to perceive, detect and solve problems on an individual or group basis.

Thus, not all students have the same feelings about teachers' capabilities and classroom organization. Besides the students who give good reviews, there are still students who think that the role of students is not very good. This may be because teachers' own performance is not very good, it may also be due to the interaction between teachers and some students not being really close during the teaching process, and it may also come from subjective feelings by students.

For teachers, they suggest: teachers need to give students more opportunities to interact outside of class; Organize some games such as crosswords, role plays, and online classes to both study and reduce the stress of classes and outdoor classes; Have more time to watch documentaries and have the opportunity to interact and study with native speakers.

- For Faculty and University: Many students want the Faculty and University to organize seminars related to subject content to improve knowledge, implement the motto "Learning goes hand in hand with practice", the cultural and artistic activities associated with English.

4.2. Survey for lecturers:

The total number of lecturers interviewed was 10 teachers from the Department of Foreign Languages.

Regarding the teaching method that approaches the learner's capacity, there are teachers who, although knowledgeable about this method, have never applied this teaching method in the classroom (10%). Meanwhile, the number of teachers asked who apply this method irregularly is quite large (7/10) or 70%. The number of lecturers who regularly apply this teaching method is 2/10 lecturers, accounting for 20%.

Due to the characteristics of foreign language subjects, this subject requires more facilities and learning conditions for practice than other theoretical subjects. The next factor that affects the effectiveness of applying this teaching method is the school's class schedule arrangement (8/10) accounting for 80%, the fact that students register to study with a dense schedule, 3 sessions a day from early morning to evening have a significant impact on students' health, which leads to affecting students' ability to learn and absorb for a long time.

Most of the interviewed teachers believe that the most effective teaching method that approaches the learner's capacity is that the learner is proactive in learning, creating the foundation for the formation of independent thinking ability in the future (9/10) accounts for 90% and improves the efficiency of acquiring knowledge thanks to interaction and diversification of types of activities (9/10) accounts for 90%. When applying teaching methods that approach learners' abilities, teachers will have to choose learning activities that are not only suitable for the content and curriculum but also suitable for students' learning abilities. Diversifying the types of exercises and increasing practice time will improve the learning efficiency of students, and at the same time students will form initiative in learning to absorb new knowledge.

From the above results, the research team found that the university's English instructors pay great attention to applying teaching methods that approach learners' abilities to replace traditional foreign language teaching methods.

5. Conclusion

The author has tried to summarize the new teaching methods applied, from how to proceed to drawing necessary lessons. I think this is the first application so there are definitely shortcomings and limitations. But with time and effort from teachers, the next time will definitely bring better results. Furthermore, innovating teaching methods is really necessary. In addition to the above methods, many more methods can be applied to English subjects. Whether or not to apply these methods needs to be based on the specific teaching practice situation as well as the characteristics of the classroom and the learning subjects. If conditions permit, we intend to conduct all of these methods to obtain the most systematic and comprehensive view of the role and effects of innovating appropriate teaching methods according to the system's requirements. credit-based training system.

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