

Renovating English teaching and learning activities in universities in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly “flat” world with a shift in thinking in the field of cooperation and integration under bilateral and multilateral agreements, it will open up a new area of economic cooperation and promote economic cooperation. With the free trade between countries all over the world, foreign languages are becoming more and more important. The challenges of international integration for Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, are communication. The article analyzes the Vietnamese Government's policy on teaching and learning English; analyzing the current situation of teaching and learning English in universities in Vietnam; make a number of proposals and recommendations for the renewal of English teaching methods in Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: activities, teaching and learning, English, university, Vietnam.

1. MAKE A PROBLEM

In order to meet the development integration trend of the country with the goal of building a team of high-quality human resources, most Vietnamese universities have introduced foreign languages, especially English, into the curriculum. In the context that the policy of autonomy for the education sector is being implemented drastically, the renovation of English teaching and learning at universities in Vietnam is an indispensable requirement.

In the process of building graduation output standards, it is necessary to emphasize training a generation of graduates who are good at their profession and use foreign languages well. At both professional and managerial levels, universities need to be aware of the need for innovative teaching methods, bringing a new atmosphere to teaching and learning foreign languages in schools, focuses primarily on teaching English, one of the global languages of communication. This report focuses on analyzing the actual situation of teaching and learning, traditional and modern methods, and providing necessary measures to change and motivate teachers and learners in their work innovate English teaching methods for university students.

2. POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM ON TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

Before the trend of integration and globalization, English is considered the most commonly used language in the world when nearly 60 countries use English as the main language, besides the mother tongue and nearly 100 countries use English as a second language. Therefore, this foreign language plays a very important role in the current globalization integration era. Human relationships as well as cooperation and investment in any field from business, commerce, transportation, technology, media, tourism... to opportunities in studying, working, expanding relationships for cooperation is not only limited to Vietnam but also to other countries around the world. English is one of the effective tools, playing a great role in helping friends from all over the world understand the voice of Vietnam in the period of international integration.

For the education in developing countries like Vietnam, improving English ability for lecturers, scientific researchers and students becomes more important and urgent than ever because it provides Knowledge “tool” for the workforce, a key human resource in the present and future of the country. Because English is not only a “tool” used to convey concepts and cultural knowledge to many different English-speaking audiences, but also one of the great “tools” to help people learn, scientific research is becoming more and more effective.

Therefore, since 2008, the Government has approved the Project on Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the period 2008-2020 with the goal of comprehensively renovating the teaching and learning of foreign languages in schools so that by 2020, the majority of young Vietnamese who

graduate from secondary schools, colleges and universities will have sufficient foreign language ability to use independent languages, confidently communicate, study and work in an integrated, multicultural environment language, multiculturalism, making foreign languages a strength of Vietnamese people (Thanh Thuy, 2017).

Decision No. 1477/QĐ-TTg approving the Program “Support for improving foreign language ability and international integration for Vietnamese youth in the period of 2022 - 2030” issued by the Prime Minister on November 25, 2020. 2022 is implemented both at home and abroad from 2022 - 2030.

The program focuses on Vietnamese youth from 6 to 30 years old, with special focus on target groups that other programs and projects have not covered such as children, adolescents and young adults. under difficult circumstances, rural youth, worker youth, economic youth, armed force youth, pupils and students at vocational education institutions.

The common goal is to raise awareness among Vietnamese children about the importance, necessity and benefits of learning, improving foreign language skills and practicing international integration skills. Equip knowledge and skills, create a favorable environment and a healthy playground for young people to study, practice, improve foreign language ability and international integration; promote the impulsiveness, pioneering and bravery of young people in equipping themselves with necessary skills to improve themselves, to meet the needs of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and international integration.

The program strives for 100% grassroots, district and provincial delegations to have at least 01 propaganda activity to raise awareness about learning and practicing foreign languages, especially English, and improving international integration capacity for local youth and units; 100% of delegations at all levels organize at least 01 activities, free online foreign language and international integration skills courses for young people in the locality; 100% of provincial delegations coordinate with the Student Union, the Provincial Youth Pioneer Team, universities, colleges, and high schools to build and organize at least one foreign language playground, especially English, activities to equip children with international integration skills in the locality and unit; 100% of the staff of the Youth Union, Association and Team at all levels participated in the National English Olympiad for young officials.

By 2030, at least 10,000,000 turns of young people will be able to participate and enjoy the Program's activities. By 2030, strive to have 100% of universities, colleges, high schools and specialized agencies at provincial, district or equivalent levels to establish or maintain regularly at least one foreign language club and international integration (Prime Minister, 2022).

The program's tasks and solutions are to create a favorable environment and build a space to support the improvement of foreign language ability and international integration; create a mechanism for youth, young cadres, especially young cadres at the level of study and practice strategies to be interested, improve foreign language capacity and international integration; provide documents, learning materials and forms for young people to have the opportunity to access, improve their foreign language ability and international integration; effective investment in youth diplomacy and international integration in both breadth and depth; strengthen mobilization of resources for international integration; raising awareness among Vietnamese children about the importance of foreign languages and international integration (Vu Phuong Nhi, 2022).

3. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' ENGLISH

Foreign languages play such an important role, society's requirements on language ability for young people are also very high, but the reality of foreign language ability of current students at universities is very different. is too low to meet that requirement. Specifically:

The average score of first-year students fluctuates at 200-250/990 TOEIC points, and with this score, students need a lot of time to achieve 450-500 TOEIC points – a score that many businesses are considering as a standard score. Minimum for them to accept the application. Especially in the era of globalization, when foreign enterprises are increasing a lot, the requirements for human resources with foreign language skills are even higher.

The level of students is uneven and there is a big difference in English ability between them. Although these classes have participated in the placement test at the beginning of the school year, in the learning process, being afraid to communicate in English and limited basic knowledge, not keeping up with the amount of knowledge of

the program will cause many problems. Difficulties for teachers, making it difficult for teachers to take care of all students, thereby hindering both teaching and learning.

When studying with native teachers, very few students can understand the lesson, the remaining students are afraid to communicate or do not understand when there is no support from the teaching assistant. So how can students be effective in the work that society needs of them? This is still an unanswered question.

In fact, the ability to communicate in English is a big barrier for Vietnamese students today. Although they have studied English from primary, secondary, and high school, to university, they study continuously, even studying at international English centers, but there are still many students who cannot speak English. The reason is why?

The curriculum is too heavy on grammar, while the practice of reflexes and communication is not focused. Students can master English grammar, but cannot turn them into tools for communication. Grammar is just a foundation to practice other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing like “learning with practice”.

The unevenness of English ability among students in the same class leads to difficulties for both teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. At higher levels, they feel bored, do not want to learn and teachers themselves also have difficulties in teaching and following up with students.

Students lack confidence and cannot overcome their own inertia. We are afraid to speak because we are afraid of being wrong, afraid of being laughed at, and gradually become closed in English lessons. Besides, there are many students who are not really aware of the importance of English in today's era. Some others have the idea of “standing in this mountain and looking at that mountain”, feeling that they are not weak in English, so they switch to learning another language that is easier, but they do not know that no language is easy to learn when they do not work hard and do not have the right study method.

The learning environment is also an equally important factor. Currently, students only use English in compulsory classes, and are almost forgotten in other activities. But for learning a foreign language, it only takes a while of not using it to “fall into oblivion”. Therefore, the establishment of English clubs to encourage students to participate in learning with teachers, native teachers, and friends is a necessity in universities today.

However, in order to learn English effectively, each student must be aware of the importance of foreign languages, have a sense of self-improvement, thereby building motivation, only appropriate learning methods can improve the level (News, 2020).

Vietnam is in the stage of development and integration, and has been paying attention to developing high-quality human resources, in which foreign language is one of the top priority factors. However, like many other Asian countries, partly due to the influence of Asian culture and customs, Vietnamese people are influenced by the “passive” and passive educational methods. get knowledge from teachers. The two-way interaction is often limited, so this indirectly affects the ability to communicate when learning a foreign language. Therefore, in order to further maximize communication efficiency, it is necessary to innovate and change teaching methods. Only then will students and learners be able to receive knowledge in English in an active, natural and creative way, more than the traditional method of simply teaching and learning.

4. SOME RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS

With international integration, English is no longer a “plus point” factor but a top concern of the community, playing an increasingly important role in the success of many individuals and businesses. However, many Vietnamese people spend a lot of time, effort and money to learn English but still cannot communicate well with foreigners. Therefore, it is necessary to renovate the teaching and learning of English, this is a regular task, there must be a synchronous change, from renovating the teaching of lecturers, to renovating the management of functional departments. Ability, to the renovation of facilities and not except the renewal of thinking and learning consciousness of the students themselves. Recommendations and proposals focus on the following contents:

Continue to invest financial resources in building infrastructure, teaching and learning conditions, and supporting teaching for lecturers. In particular, classrooms need an internet connection to serve for high-quality and effective exchange, discussion or skill practice sessions, easily assisting teachers in finding specific illustrative examples possible and practical on the internet.

Renovate curricula towards practical content. Currently, the university's curricula, although being renewed and updated, are still heavily theoretical, academic, or the content is too heavy or too specialized. While, graduates do not seem to apply this knowledge to work practice. Therefore, the duration and frequency of knowledge in the curriculum need to be researched and adjusted to be more suitable with the change of socio-economic context.

Organizing exchanges and exchanging experiences on modern teaching methods with domestic and foreign universities. In particular, in the context of financial autonomy of some universities today, it is necessary to focus on the method of dialogue, exchange and exchange of online teaching experiences to both save costs and bring effective results.

Build learning motivation for students. Accordingly, at the beginning of class, teachers must have a strategy to introduce the importance of learning English. We not only give a general, but very specific analysis of the benefits of students when learning English. If teachers know how to analyze deeply and give practical examples, students will be ready to learn English passionately, because they really know that English is very much needed for intellectuals. Some examples are: If you want to integrate and exploit advanced knowledge sources in the world, if you have good expertise and good English, you will be a good candidate for admission to working positions. In addition, learning English helps students develop many skills: better communication skills, faster thinking, faster reaction, judgment skills, generalization... and especially English language students have the opportunity to integrate with the world in terms of working methods... to convince students to be interested in the subject, teachers must have easy-to-understand and qualified communication skills, high reliability.

Developing foreign language learning methods for students. In developing foreign language learning methods for students, teachers need to teach learners, first of all, they should teach learners how to study and how to access online and social media resources, which focuses on building their own ways of self-study through social networks because the current rate of using smart devices and the internet among young Vietnamese is at a high level.

Besides, although each student has their own learning method, the lecturer should suggest methods of learning vocabulary, grammar and skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; Train students to guess words in context; Build a way to practice a lot in pairs, in groups. The teacher asks students to exchange their thoughts on a question or topic in pairs or small groups, and then asks the group representative to share their thoughts with the larger group. After listening to different answers/thoughts, students vote for the best answer. In addition, teachers can also organize new activities and games to help students take the initiative in learning and become the center of the class. From there, the teacher will be the observer, coordinator, and manager of the activities, and the classroom atmosphere will always be lively, exciting and comfortable.

Renovate lecture content associated with problems in life. For example, in the 4 basic skills training sessions, the lecturer can choose a topic about the impact of the US - China trade war on the global financial - monetary market. With this topic, lecturers can get a lot of articles and analysis videos of experts in international newspapers. By using these materials, both create excitement about the content because this is a hot issue, and help students develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, acquire more knowledge of financial economics and especially access to a lot of newly updated derivative words that are not in the dictionary.

Focus on using information technology, social networks, achievements of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 in teaching. The use of modern technologies and methods of technology support by direct interaction will not only help students learn quickly and easily, but also teachers will not have much pressure on the lesson plan. For example, when discussing a problem of labor and employment in the world, through a live stream with an expert, any citizen (can be an online friend of a lecturer or student) to directly discuss that issue, both vividly and realistically (Financial Investment Category, 2019).

5. CONCLUSION

Along with the development of the integration process and the increasingly innovative English teaching method, Vietnamese people in general and Vietnamese students in particular are getting closer and closer to improving their English ability. However, in order to achieve the goals as set out by the Government's Scheme, the education sector in general and universities in particular need to have specific and systematic strategies in order to make the best use of their learning potential. learners' foreign language. It is necessary to innovate teaching methods and approaches to maximize the interaction between teachers and students. At the same time, renew the curriculum framework, curricula, documents, supporting software, teaching tools and methods with the

orientation of focusing on communication. Improving communication capacity in English in the process of imparting knowledge is most important to create an environment to use and practice English right at school. Schools can create a fully English-speaking student area like in a canteen. At that time, transactions and communication in this area must be done in English. In addition, the tables, notices and instructions in the school should also be made in English.

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