

Methods of teaching English to improve the quality of Experiential activities for grade-4 pupils in Cu Chi district, Ho Chi Minh city

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Abstract: English is a compulsory subject within the general education curriculum spanning grades 3 to 12. As a core subject in the elementary education system, English plays a pivotal role in equipping pupils with essential communicative competencies. This study investigates innovative methods to enhance the quality of experiential activities in teaching English to Grade-4 pupils. The primary objective is to cultivate proficiency in English communication and foster the development of general cognitive and social abilities. Improved experiential activities are posited to enhance pupils' overall academic performance, facilitate more effective engagement in learning across disciplines, and support lifelong learning endeavors. This research offers insights into pedagogical strategies that can be implemented to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, thereby promoting higher levels of Grade-4 pupils' participation and retention of language skills.

Keywords: Method, experiential activities, English teaching methods, Grade-4 pupils, interactive learning environment.

Introduction

The new general education program in English, as specified in Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT dated December 26, 2018, aims to develop student's communication skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with linguistic knowledge (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar). It focuses on building these skills through specific communication competency units relevant to primary school pupils' needs and abilities. The program follows the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam (Circular No. 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT dated January 24, 2014), requiring pupils to reach Level 1 by the end of elementary school, Level 2 by the end of middle school, and Level 3 by the end of high school.

Given the overarching goals of innovating teaching methods and placing pupils at the center of the learning process, while promoting student engagement and positivity, various challenges have emerged, particularly with the implementation of the new general education program. Specifically, in the context of teaching English at the elementary level, integrating experiential activities with the curriculum presents unique challenges. Consequently, critical questions arise: How can we effectively engage pupils in experiential activities related to their

lessons? What solutions can enhance the quality of foreign language instruction when integrating experiential activities? Additionally, how can we efficiently organize and scale the implementation of these experiential activities?

As a primary school English teacher, addressing these questions through concrete actions is imperative. It is essential not only to facilitate professional development and mutual learning among colleagues but also to contribute meaningfully to the broader educational mission. Recognizing the significance of this task, the focus has been placed on the topic "Methods of Teaching English to Improve the Quality of Experiential Activities for Grade-4 Pupils in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City." This investigation aims to identify and implement effective measures that can improve the integration of experiential activities into the English curriculum, thereby enriching the educational experience for pupils.

Methodology

Research design

The topic is researched and tested through actual English teaching at for Grade-4 pupils in Cu Chi district during the first semester of the 2023-2024 school year. This research involves a comprehensive approach, including demonstration lessons,

exemplary lessons, school exercises, and experiential learning activities.

Additionally, it involves collaborative efforts with colleagues to refine and enhance teaching methods. The study also incorporates practical observations conducted at various primary schools both within and outside the district. These observations are supplemented by insights gained from professional training sessions, seminars, and English lectures organized by the educational authorities in the District and Ho Chi Minh City. Through this multifaceted approach, the research aims to develop effective strategies for integrating experiential activities into the English curriculum, thereby improving the quality of education.

Research purpose

Through this research, it is anticipated that the proposed solutions will assist elementary English teachers in alleviating their concerns about addressing challenges in teaching. Specifically, integrating experiential activities into foreign language instruction can be daunting. The goal is to provide effective strategies that not only help pupils become self-aware and proactive in various English communication scenarios but also enhance their overall engagement and positivity. These strategies are designed to create the right conditions for pupils to experience and internalize new knowledge, enabling them to apply it effectively in their daily lives. By implementing these measures, a more dynamic and enriching learning environment for pupils can be fostered.

Research methods

The author uses theoretical research methods including collecting and selecting domestic and foreign documents related to experiential activities in English teaching methods for elementary school pupils. In addition, the author closely follows the guiding documents of the Ministry of Education and Training related to educational goals, methods and orientation, especially according to the new 2018 general education program as a basis argument for the topic.

For practical research methods, the author uses observation methods, expert opinion methods, experience summarization methods and pedagogical experimental methods to study the feasibility relevance, the application effectiveness of experiential activities in English teaching methods for elementary school pupils.

Research content

The practice of the school's foreign language lessons has significantly contributed to positive outcomes in teaching English to grade-4 pupils, particularly through the integration of experiential activities in alignment with the new curriculum. This approach places a strong emphasis on developing communication skills. By incorporating practical activities, the research highlights how fourth-grade pupils can enhance their autonomy, positivity, and creativity in interactions with teachers. Furthermore, it demonstrates how pupils can effectively apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-life situations. These findings underscore the importance of experiential learning in fostering a dynamic and engaging educational environment.

The current situation

In reality, the issue of teaching aimed at developing student capacity still faces numerous difficulties and inadequacies in both high schools and elementary schools. A significant challenge is that many English teachers do not fully comprehend the importance of integrating experiential activities into their teaching methodologies. Often, teachers are still influenced by traditional, one-way teaching methods that prioritize the mere transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. This approach tends to make pupils passive recipients rather than active participants in their learning process. Moreover, the complexity and time-consuming nature of many experiential activities can lead to frustration among teachers, causing them to skip essential steps in teaching English. These challenges hinder the effective implementation of a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

*Reasons:

a. Teacher-related Issues

A considerable number of English teachers exhibit reluctance to adopt new teaching methods, preferring instead to rely on traditional, one-way teaching approaches. This resistance to change results in a classroom dynamic where pupils remain passive learners, lacking the opportunity to engage actively with the material. Furthermore, professional development opportunities such as training sessions, seminars, and workshops focusing on experiential activities in English are neither diverse nor frequent. Consequently, English teachers have limited exposure to and familiarity with innovative teaching methodologies. This lack of professional development inhibits their ability to integrate experiential activities effectively into their lessons.

b. Student-related Issues

The composition of classes presents additional challenges. For instance, in one class, the levels of student ability within each class are not uniform, which is partly due to the school's recent establishment. This variability in student abilities makes it difficult to implement experiential learning activities that cater to all pupils' needs. Teachers must find ways to address the diverse learning levels and ensure that each student can engage with and benefit from the experiential activities.

In summary, the current status of teaching English with a focus on developing student capacity is hindered by both teacher-related and student-related issues. Overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort to provide teachers with adequate professional development and support, as well as strategies to manage and engage diverse student populations effectively.

Major Methods in Organizing Experiential Learning Activities for Teaching English to Pupils

**Method 1: Interdisciplinary English Teaching*

Objective: The primary aim of interdisciplinary English teaching is to provide pupils with a holistic learning experience by integrating English language instruction with other subjects such as mathematics, science, and the arts. This approach is designed to enhance students' overall understanding and application of English in various contexts.

Implementation: To achieve this, educators can design lessons that incorporate elements from different disciplines. For example, in a lesson on environmental science, pupils can learn vocabulary related to nature and ecosystems while also engaging in scientific experiments or discussions. Similarly, in a math lesson, pupils might solve problems that require them to read and understand instructions in English. Artistic projects, such as creating a storyboard for a historical event, can further blend language learning with creative expression.

Significance: This method helps pupils develop a range of English language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and contextual usage. Additionally, it fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as pupils apply their language skills to different subjects. By encountering English in diverse contexts, pupils also improve their adaptability and ability to transfer knowledge across domains. Furthermore, interdisciplinary teaching promotes collaboration and communication skills, as pupils often work in groups to complete integrated projects.

**Method 2: Real-Life Contextual English Teaching*

Objective: The goal of real-life contextual English teaching is to make language learning relevant and practical by linking it to everyday situations and experiences. This approach aims to prepare pupils for real-world communication by using authentic contexts to teach English.

Implementation: Educators can employ various strategies to integrate real-life contexts into English lessons. Teaching through thematic units that reflect pupils' interests and daily experiences can make lessons more engaging. For instance, topics like shopping, travel, and cooking can provide a rich context for vocabulary and grammar practice. Role-playing activities, where pupils simulate real-life scenarios such as ordering food at a restaurant or asking for directions, can enhance speaking and listening skills. Project-based learning, where pupils undertake long-term projects, such as organizing a community event or conducting a survey, can also provide meaningful opportunities for language use.

Significance: This method helps pupils develop practical communication skills that are directly applicable to everyday situations. It enhances their ability to use English spontaneously and fluently in various contexts. By engaging in real-life tasks, pupils also improve their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Moreover, this approach encourages the development of soft skills such as teamwork, time management, and cultural awareness, as pupils often collaborate on projects and navigate diverse social interactions.

Examples of Experiential Activities in Teaching English for Grade-4 Pupils

a. Teaching English through Math and Science:

Objective to achieve: Help pupils apply English across subjects, increase vocabulary, stimulate exploration and logical thinking while learning English.



Elementary school pupils often find learning English through interactive and hands-on methods highly engaging. For example, a lesson on floating and sinking objects in water (Unit 6–Lesson 2: CLIL: Science) can captivate pupils by allowing them to explore and discover scientific principles firsthand. Additionally, practical activities such as shopping at a market or visiting a bookstore can help pupils apply mathematical calculations and language skills in real-world scenarios. By organizing activities that involve tangible products, models, toys, and tools, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that fosters a love for English and enhances pupils’ understanding and application of knowledge.

Picture 7.3.a. Unit 6–Lesson 2: CLIL: Science (Lesson about objects that sink and float in water)

b. Teaching English through Daily Situations:



Picture 7.3.c.1. Example of Unit 6: Fluency Time 2

Objective to achieve: Help pupils apply vocabulary and short conversations about daily life, thereby improving communication skills and practicing listening skills.

Unit 6: Fluency Time 2 offers an excellent framework for designing engaging activities that assess pupils’ proficiency and facilitate effective communication in English through short dialogues. These dialogues are based on everyday situations, such as shopping, dining, and playing, making them easy to understand and relatable. This approach helps pupils demonstrate their listening and speaking skills fluently and naturally, enhancing their ability to communicate in real-life contexts.



Picture 7.3.c.2. A communication activity

c. Teaching English on Topics:

Objective to achieve: Help pupils approach different topics, develop creativity and language expression ability.

Teaching English by thematic topics, such as a Halloween activity in class 4.1, can capture pupils’ interest through fun and effective activities that promote positivity and creativity. In this method, teachers organize pupils to create products based on weekly, monthly, or yearly themes and present their creations. This not only engages pupils but also enhances their ability to think creatively and apply their language skills in various contexts.

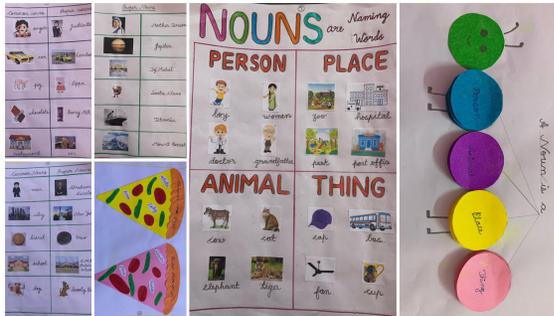


Picture 7.3.d. An activity on Halloween

d. Teaching English with Project-based Activities:

Objectives to achieve: Help pupils develop teamwork skills, information-gathering skills, self-study skills and use English as a learning tool.

In project-based activities, teachers assign projects that are appropriate for the student’s level, requiring them to research and gather information from various sources such as the Internet, books, and television. Pupils then present their findings and project implementation to the class. This method helps pupils build confidence in communication and presentation, while also developing their self-study and self-management skills. Project-based learning encourages pupils to take ownership of their education and apply their knowledge in meaningful ways.



Picture 7.3.e. A project-based activity in class 4.2

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, teachers can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment. These methods not only help pupils effectively integrate and apply their English language skills in real-life contexts but also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language. Through experiential learning, pupils can become more autonomous, positive, and creative learners, ultimately enhancing their overall educational experience.

Results:

Based on the methods and activities proposed above, the author applied the experiment for Grade-4 pupils at Huynh Van Co primary school, Cu Chi district in the 2023 - 2024 school year and achieved the following results:

THE FINAL RESULTS OF SCHOOL YEAR IN ENGLISH FOR GRADE-4			
School year	Class	> 5 marks	< 5 marks
2023-2024	4/1, 4/2	100%	0%
Pupils' attitudes on English	100% the 4th grade pupils enjoyed learning English		

Figure 8. The final results of the school year in English for Grade-4 students in Huynh Van Co primary school

Suggestions

To ensure that English teaching, integrated with experiential activities, is truly effective in promoting positivity and creativity among 4th-grade pupils, thus improving the overall quality of education and forming essential language skills, the school should undertake the following actions:

Professional Development: Allow English teachers to participate in training programs and professional development sessions to enhance their qualifications. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt innovative teaching methods that promote student abilities.

Diversification of Teaching Methods: Incorporate a variety of English teaching methods and utilize supportive software, electronic tools, websites, applications, and online resources.

Timely Dissemination of Professional Documents: Ensure that professional documents are promptly disseminated to teachers for research and implementation.

Continuous Improvement and Creativity: English teachers should continually study and improve their teaching expertise, gaining insights from professional topics, training sessions, lectures, and colleagues. Teachers should be encouraged to be bold and creative in their teaching approaches to engage pupils in meaningful and practical experiential activities.

Conclusion:

Through methods and experiential activities in teaching English to grade-4 pupils, with experimental results, the suggestions have been applied effectively, bringing positive results for pupils not only in the classroom but also helping them gradually apply English in everyday life. The author affirms that these methods can be expanded and applied to grade-4 pupils at other elementary schools in the district and city, making an important contribution to improving capacity, positivity, and creativity. and pupils' ability to handle real-life situations.

This research has made an important contribution to innovating foreign language teaching methods, equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of experiential teaching. It is consistent with the goal of the 2018 General Education Program, which is to develop learner capacity.

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