

# Some solutions to improve efficiency in teaching English for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students at Hai Phong university

Nguyễn Tiến Sỹ

ThS. Trường Đại học Hải Phòng

Received: 22/9/2023; Accepted: 25/9/2023; Published: 29/9/2023

**Abstract:** This paper shows problems while teaching English to 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, then he offers some procedures to improve English teaching at Hai Phong University. The author used observation skill.

**Keywords:** Solution; efficiency; 2<sup>nd</sup> year students; English

## 1. Introduction

For years working in Foreign Language Department - Hai Phong University, I have met many difficulties in dealing with both students and materials. Some problems are solvable, but some are not. Especially I am a lecturer of English, at which is considered to be very difficult to be good.

However, teaching English is perhaps the thing I like best. It is important for a teacher of English, as myself, to teach methodologically, this belongs to each teacher's personality. Because this fits with this one but that does not due to many factors.

In recent years, teaching and learning English have been developed and become a compulsory subject in all universities for many years, and now it plays an extremely vital role in the school curriculum. Therefore, learning English has become not only an essential demand among universities but also of the whole Viet Nam society.

## 2. Content

In this assignment, I merely want to introduce the problems that I do think they are necessary to be worked out in terms of methodology, and there are some possible solutions enclosed:

\*Class size

\*Mother-tongue interference

\*Student response

Investigation

The first constraint is the size of the class. I have undergone the classes with the sheer size with a range of abilities there. For such big-size classes, the common resulting difficulties are inevitable, as:

\*Students cannot move easily

\*Teacher cannot move easily

\*The seating arrangement seems to prevent a number of activities

\*There is limited eye-contact from teacher to

students

\*There is limited or no eye-contact amongst students

\*Teacher cannot give attention to all students

\*Interaction tends to be restricted to those closest to the front

\*The seats at the back tend to attract students who want to do something privately rather than English.

\*People "hide" away

\*There is often a wide range of abilities

\*Discipline can be a problem

\*Lecturing seems to be the only workable lesson type

As I enumerated, there are many problems that any teacher can have in his/her teaching. Here I hesitate to propose any easy solutions to such problems, mainly because I do not know your specific situation and the particular dilemma you have. So I merely offer two things that have been tested by myself with my own students: (1) an assessment procedures that may help you towards finding your own solutions to such problems and (2) I myself believe that there are probably many options available in response to any problem or even our fear of trying something different from what is normally done.

To overcome such problems, I would like to suggest some solutions:

\*Defining the problems:

You should write a brief definition of one specific problem that act as a constraint on your teaching. For example: I can't use group work and pair work in my class because there are so many students and they can't move from their seats.

\*Analysing and rewriting the problem

Break the problem up into smaller problems. For example, the sentence above can be: I can't use group work; I can't use pair work; there are a lot students;

they can't move from their seats.

Now rewrite your definition of each small problem, trying to word the new descriptions as honestly as possible to show the true native of the constraints. For example, is it entirely a limit imposed from outside? Or is it a personal decision not to do something? Be specific about your own thoughts and fears. For example, in the 4<sup>th</sup> component part, I wrote: They can't move from their seats. In the rewritten version I put: I choose not to get the student to move from their seats because I think it would be difficult, very noisy and I am frightened that there would be chaos in the room.

#### *\*Brainstorming*

You should choose one of these component problems and make a list of all the possible, impossible, completely impossible and fantastic options that would help to solve this problem. Do not censor your brainstorming. Do not stop to question or think about what you are writing. Look for options within you as well as for things outside yourself. For example, rearrange the seating; move to different classes; get them to climb over the seats; push the seats up against the wall; get half the students to turn round and face the students behind; let them sit on the desks to do the activities; go into the school hall for English lessons; go outside on grass; do not worry about the noise; take the risk that getting them to move will be OK; find out how other teachers do it; ask the students what they think about these ideas-what's their solution; negotiate a contract-quiet movement in exchange for more variety of activities.

#### *\*Reflecting on options*

When the flow of ideas seems to be used up, go back slowly over the list and consider each one. Reflect on whether it is practicable, what might prevent it working, why you don't do it, how "risky" it would be for you to try it out, so on and so forth.

#### *\*Action planning*

This is a very important step. You should make a word of what you intend to do, perhaps a small "try-out" of one idea in your next class. Choose modest steps. For example, next lesson I will try a short five-minute speaking activity where I will ask the students to turn around and work with the student in the row behind or I will talk with the deputy Head teacher and find out if our class can use the school hall for a lesson.

The second constraint is that students keep using

their own language. This is also a big question for a teacher of English to solve. This is extremely common in monolingual classes as our universities. So what might the reasons be? In my opinion, they are due to:

*\*It's easier to speak mother tongue*

*\*The teacher always correct students' mistakes and errors*

*\*Students do not want to get wrong in front of their friends*

*\*It's not "in" to speak in English*

*\*Students cannot speak English to express the due idea or want*

Some teachers have found that competition and bribery are techniques that work. For example, when a student speaks English the teacher gives them marks and those who get high marks will get a small gift. I myself think that it is potentially troublesome, as it seems to be building a motivation quite separate from the genuine interest in the subject matter as "Do this to please teacher" case.

I am sure that inducements, threats, prize... can all have limited success in creating "English-only" classroom but I believe that a more complete solution involves looking at the whole atmosphere of the class.

As an ideal, I would like a classroom where learners were free to use their own tongue whenever they wanted but in fact mostly *chose* to use English. How would this be possible? Perhaps by creating a climate where it was OK to use English where English using was normal and natural and not special or frightening. So I would like to introduce some ideas that can be helpful to some teachers.

*\*Use lots of listening materials to surround them in the sounds of English*

*\*Make the room English (English-speaking motivated environment)*

*\*Negotiate the ground rules with the students, or better, let them set them completely by themselves*

*\*Discuss the point of the activity, lesson, course... Agree how it will be done, why using English important*

*\*Respond positively to every effort at using English*

*\*Do not tell off learners for not using English but keep operating in English yourself*

*\*Only "hear" English*

*\*Spend a lot of time on fluency work without*

correction

\*Establish that you are delighted for them to speak any English at all- communication is your priority, rather than accuracy

\*Create lots of pair and small group activities that require them to do something with English without the loss of face of getting it wrong in a bigger group

\*When it becomes a big problem, stop the activities and negotiate again: I notice that many of you are using a different language. Is it OK?

In this case, an appropriate procedure is very important to fix this problem:

Seeing things from different viewpoint: **changes**. In this circumstance, imagine yourself as a specific individual student in the class. What change in the teacher, student, atmosphere, activities, lessons, etc. would make you comfortable or even keen to use English in class?

The last but not least problem is the student complaints.

Students do complain sometimes at unexpected times just when you think the course and the lessons are running very well. Sometimes it is one student who catches you outside the classroom or even in the waiting room, sometimes a whole deputation at the end of a lesson. It can be a shock to realize that your own intuitive perception of their views is completely wrong.

Sometimes it can be more serious. Many teachers, my colleagues are examples, have been through an unnerving moment when a student or a class has gone to the Head or even the Dean of Department and complained about them that they are not doing or doing too much of that, or they do not like the way they teach. It can feel very destructive or deeply painful; but it can also be a real chance to move forwards.

The following is merely my suggestive solutions to 'reduce' the pain:

*\*Imagine yourself as one student in your own class. What would you say about your teacher, the lesson and the course if you had the chance?*

*\*Have you been given a real chance to say this by your teacher?*

*\*If the answer to the above question is no, why do you think this is? How could it be different?*

If the answer is *yes*, has the teacher really listened and taken account of what you said or was the operation more cosmetic?

As the teacher, how do you feel about this student. Unexpected complaints usually come when the teacher has been unwillingly or unable to allow the learners genuine chances to say what they want to. This sounds easy enough to do; in practice it can be quite difficult. It is quite easy then to avoid the dialogue, but in fact to avoid the real question or to ask questions in such a way that the students know what is expected of them or to ask, but then not listen.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many other constraints that need to be tested and discussed. In this assignment, I merely introduce three 'burning' problems: class size, mother-tongue interference and students' response that are tested carefully with the help of the students. For the majors, most of them take these into consideration but for the minors, they are not very interested to this so the results are not the estimation of all students, however, these constraints may be the ones that all teachers whether or not have to take it seriously.

### References

1. Le Van Canh (2004) *Understanding Foreign Language Teaching Methodology*. Hanoi National University Publisher
2. Larsen-Freeman, D (2000) *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Oxford University Press
3. Holliday, A (1994) *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
4. Scrivener, J. (1998) *Learning Teaching* Mc Milan Publishers
5. Azura Binti Abdul Aziz (2016). The use of mind mapping technique in increasing students' vocabulary list. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, (June)
6. DePorter, B., Reardon, M and Singer-Nourie. (1999). *Quantum Teaching: Orchestrating Student Success* (1st edition) . Georgia: Pearson
7. Dunn, RS., Dunn, K., & Price, G.E. (1979). Identifying individual learning styles. *National Association of Secondary School Principals*
4. Oldfather, P., Bonds, S., & Bray, T. (1994). Stalking the "fuzzy sunshine seeds": constructivist processes for teaching about constructivism in teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 21(5), 5-14.