

Challenges in teaching english to elementary school students in Hung yen province and some solutions

*Đỗ Thị Huyền, Đặng Văn Hiến**

** Trường Đại Học Sư Phạm Kỹ Thuật Hưng Yên*

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Abstract: English is considered the international language of communication. Mastery of English opens doors for communication with people from various countries and territories around the world. In an increasingly globalized world, the demand for employees proficient in English in international companies and fields such as tourism, business, and technology is rapidly increasing. Learning English has become an indispensable necessity for personal development. Especially for elementary school students, learning and using English is more emphasized than ever. Learning English from an early age brings many benefits to students, helping them develop critical thinking, communication, and international integration skills. However, teaching English to elementary school students also encounters many challenges. In this article, the author aims to thoroughly understand the difficult challenges in teaching English to elementary school students in general and first-grade students in Hung Yen province in particular, while providing some solutions to create opportunities and foster creativity for teachers.

Key words: Teaching English, English learning methods, First-grade students, Teaching content.

I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the journey of education, teaching English to elementary school students plays an incredibly important and challenging role. Especially for first-grade students, they embark on an exciting journey, full of curiosity and eagerness to explore the complexities of a new language. Given the significance of learning English from a young age, elementary school teachers not only act as educators but also as individuals shaping the language and cultural foundation for students.

Alongside the advantages, primary schools are currently facing difficulties and challenges in teaching English. This article will focus on exploring the challenges of teaching English to first-grade students in primary schools in Hung Yen province and collectively discover effective strategies and methods for teaching English to elementary school students. From there, we aim to open new doors and create limitless opportunities for the development of future generations.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1. Basic Concepts

2.1.1. Teaching Methods

There are many perspectives on teaching methods, but the most commonly used perspective is: Teaching method is the way resources in education such as teachers, classrooms, learning tools, and physical facilities are utilized to educate learners [9].

Teaching method is the coordinated and unified activities of teachers and students in the teaching process, conducted under the leadership role of the teacher to optimally achieve the teaching objectives and tasks.

2.1.2. Elementary school students

Elementary school students are students typically aged between 6 and 11 (from Grade 1 to Grade 5). This is the initial stage of formal education within the education system, where they are introduced to fundamental knowledge in culture, science, mathematics, and language. During this stage, the focus of learning is often on developing basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as fostering social skills and independence.

First-grade students are typically around the age of 6-7 (depending on the regulations of each country). This marks the first year of primary education, where students officially begin their learning journey in elementary school.

2.1.3. The importance of teaching English to first-grade students

- The golden period for language learning: According to Tiziana Cotrufo, a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of Pisa (Italy) and a professor at the University of Barcelona (Spain), she concluded that 'From a neurobiological perspective, the younger the child, the more efficient the brain's ability to absorb information.' Children at

the age of 6, especially first-grade students, are in a period of strong language development. Their brains are capable of absorbing and processing information quickly and effectively.

- Language cognitive development: Learning English early helps children develop language cognition comprehensively, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

- Enhanced memory retention: The process of learning English helps children to memorize and process information more effectively.

- Development of communication skills: English helps children communicate with people from all over the world, expanding their perspectives and understanding.

- Lay the foundation for future learning: Learning English early helps children establish a solid foundation to continue studying other subjects in English in the future.

III. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HUNG YEN PROVINCE AND THE CHALLENGES FACED TODAY

3.1. Introduction to elementary schools in Hung Yen province

Hung Yen province was established in the 12th year of Minh Mang’s reign (1831). In the 16th and 17th centuries, the land of Hung Yen was known through the place name of Pho Hien with the saying “First Kinh Ky, second Pho Hien”. It was a famous trading port, the largest in the Outer Region, bustling with commercial activities and bustling trade with many countries around the world, quickly becoming a prosperous urban area - a miniature Trang An. Hung Yen is also a land of natural beauty, talented people, rich in scholarly traditions, respecting teachers, valuing morality, and possessing a resilient spirit [1].

Hung Yen province, located in the Red River Delta region in northern Vietnam, is renowned for its diverse and abundant elementary schools, both in terms of educational quality and facilities. According to the latest statistics up to 2020, the entire province has a total of 143 elementary schools. Among them, the number of first-grade students across the province is 28,600 [4].

Elementary schools in Hung Yen are often equipped with modern facilities, such as bright classrooms, libraries, computer rooms, and spacious playgrounds. Particularly, elementary schools in Hung Yen typically provide a comfortable and safe learning

environment, which facilitates the comprehensive development of students.

3.2. The current situation of teaching English to first-grade students in Hung Yen province

English teachers play a crucial role in igniting students’ enthusiasm and laying a solid foundation for first-grade students in their journey of mastering the language.

- * Advantages: To keep up with the increasingly developing trend, English teachers have been making reasonable transformations. Teachers have focused on activities that stimulate students’ positive learning attitudes, collected visual aids to make lessons more vivid, applied active teaching methods, used modern teaching tools, and encouraged students to be more proactive in their studies. The content of the lessons has become more refined and engaging.

- * Challenge: However, teaching English to first-grade students still faces shortcomings. The learning outcomes of these students will clearly reflect the quality of English teaching. Out of a total of 28,600 students, the academic results for the first semester of the 2023-2024 school year are as follows:

Table 1: Regarding the academic results of English language learning for first-grade students in Hung Yen province

School year/Classification	2023- 2024
Excellent	5.230 ((18%))
Good	8.311 (29%)
Fair	13.833 (48%)
Average	1.226(5%)
Total	28.600 (100%)

From the data in the table above, we have the following chart:

Chart 1: Regarding the percentage distribution of English academic classifications for first-grade students in Hung Yen province.

Through the table and chart above, it can be seen that the proportion of excellent and good students is low: Excellent 18%, Good 29%. Meanwhile, the proportion of fair students is relatively high at 48%, and the proportion of average students is 5%. The reality shows that in an increasingly developed society, the demand for proficient English usage is very high. Therefore, it is necessary to overcome the shortcomings in teaching and learning English even

more to increase the proportion of students who are good and excellent in English.

3. 3. The causes of these challenges are as follows

3.3.1. On the part of the teachers

The teaching methods that are not suitable for the age and level of first-grade students can make learning English boring and difficult to understand. The use of inflexible and inappropriate teaching methods can reduce students' interest and engagement.

Some teachers have not received systematic training in English teaching methods for young children.

3.3.2. On the part of the students

At such a young age, first-grade students are often more interested in playing games than studying. Additionally, they quickly get bored and are prone to giving up when faced with new knowledge.

Due to their young age, students may struggle with pronunciation. They may also worry about making mistakes and fear criticism [2].

3.3.3. On the part of the families

The English learning environment doesn't just exist within the classroom but also requires support and encouragement from families. Many families don't support their children's English learning, which can make it difficult for students to continue learning and developing.

3.3.4. On the part of the schools

First-grade students need dynamic learning materials that are suitable for their age and level. Some schools lack sufficient classrooms and modern teaching equipment to support students' English learning.

IV. HERE ARE SOME SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH TEACHING FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN HUNG YEN PROVINCE

4.1. Teachers need to regularly innovate their teaching methods

Create a positive and effective English learning environment for students. If students of this age group enjoy exploration and are attracted to stories and images, then integrate teaching through songs, stories...

Develop games and practical activities such as role-playing, puzzles, and vocabulary games to stimulate student participation and interaction. Practical activities help students apply language in real-life situations and develop communication skills.

4.2. Maximize the use of teaching resources

Teaching resources are considered as the positive companions of teachers, providing active support. Teachers need to proficiently utilize technology such as computers, projectors, tablets, educational software, and learning websites to present information visually and vividly. Online resources such as videos, songs, and online games can also be used to support the learning process.

4.3. Create a positive learning environment

Establish a positive and supportive learning environment by using praise, encouragement, and creating activities that stimulate creative thinking. A positive and supportive environment helps students feel more confident when participating in the English learning process.

4.4. Organize English presentation competitions

Organizing competitions along with attractive prizes is very appealing to students. This not only boosts their confidence but also enhances the quality of their learning. Competitions help assess the level of English proficiency of students after a period of study. Consequently, teachers can make accurate assessments of each student's English language proficiency to tailor appropriate teaching methods.

4.5. Enhance the role of the family

Parents need to pay attention to their child's English learning and create opportunities for them to learn English at home. They can create an English learning environment at home by allowing their child to listen to English music, watch English cartoons, and read English books.

4.6. The collaboration between schools and relevant agencies

The school needs to develop an English language program and provide facilities that are suitable for the students' levels and needs.

Organize training courses and professional development for teachers: Help teachers improve their English teaching skills.

Organize extracurricular activities in English: Provide students with opportunities to practice English communication regularly.

Agencies can support schools in developing language programs by providing materials, experts, and practical experience.

Businesses can sponsor English language programs for students at schools.

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từ người khác không.

Xếp các nhiệm vụ vào ô tương ứng: Dựa trên mức độ quan trọng và khẩn cấp, xếp các nhiệm vụ vào ô tương ứng trong ma trận quản lý thời gian của Eisenhower:

Ưu tiên và lập kế hoạch: Dựa trên ma trận, đã có một cái nhìn rõ ràng về ưu tiên công việc. Bắt đầu với ô Quan trọng và Khẩn cấp, tập trung vào việc hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ trong ô này. Sau đó, dành thời gian cho các nhiệm vụ Quan trọng nhưng Không khẩn cấp để đảm bảo tiến bộ trong dài hạn.

Theo dõi và điều chỉnh: Theo dõi tiến độ công việc và tuân thủ ma trận QLTG của Eisenhower. Nếu có sự thay đổi hoặc ưu tiên thay đổi, hãy điều chỉnh và cập nhật ma trận để đảm bảo rằng đang tập trung vào những nhiệm vụ quan trọng nhất.

3. Kết luận

Eisenhower từng nói: “Việc quan trọng hiếm khi khẩn cấp, và việc khẩn cấp hiếm khi quan trọng”. Bằng cách sử dụng ma trận QLTG của Eisenhower, người dùng có thể đánh giá và ưu tiên công việc một cách hiệu quả. Bằng cách tập trung vào ô Quan trọng và Khẩn cấp trước tiên, người dùng có thể đảm bảo rằng các nhiệm vụ quan trọng nhất được hoàn thành đúng thời hạn. Sau đó, họ có thể dành thời gian cho các nhiệm vụ Quan trọng nhưng Không khẩn cấp để đảm bảo sự tiến bộ và thành công

trong dài hạn.

Ma trận QLTG của Eisenhower là một cách hiệu quả để tập trung vào những việc quan trọng và ưu tiên công việc một cách thông minh. Nó giúp người sử dụng tối ưu hóa sử dụng thời gian, tránh lãng phí và đạt được hiệu suất cao trong công việc và cuộc sống hàng ngày.

Trên thực tế, ma trận QLTG của Eisenhower có thể được áp dụng không chỉ vào công việc hàng ngày mà còn vào bất kỳ lĩnh vực nào trong cuộc sống. Nó giúp tạo ra sự ưu tiên, tập trung vào việc quan trọng nhất và tránh lãng phí thời gian vào những việc không quan trọng. Hãy lưu ý rằng ma trận QLTG của Eisenhower là một công cụ hữu ích, nhưng còn phụ thuộc vào khả năng đánh giá và ưu tiên của người dùng. Hãy đảm bảo người dùng thực hiện đánh giá thật chính xác về mức độ quan trọng và khẩn cấp của các nhiệm vụ để đạt được hiệu quả tối đa từ việc sử dụng ma trận này.

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CONCLUSION

In the modern age, learning English from a young age has become an essential part of the educational development of young learners. For first-grade students, accessing and continuing to hone English language skills is not only a necessity but also a significant advantage for their comprehensive development.

First graders don't just learn vocabulary and grammar; they also engage with a new world where they can express their ideas, interact with people from other countries, and explore the diverse cultures of the world around them. This not only helps them develop communication skills but also opens up endless opportunities for the future. Despite many challenges, I believe that with cooperation and support from teachers, students, families, schools, and society, significant changes can be made.

I hope this article will serve as a reference for teaching English to first-grade students in Hung

Yen province specifically and elementary schools nationwide in general.

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