

MÔ HÌNH GIẢNG DẠY NHÓM ÁP DỤNG TRONG KỸ NĂNG NÓI CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT – NĂM HỌC 2006-2007

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Tóm tắt

Mô hình giảng dạy nhóm (Team teaching) từ lâu đã được đánh giá rất cao về chất lượng cũng như về tính đa dạng, mang lại hiệu quả cao cho cả người học lẫn người dạy. Trong năm học 2006-2007, mô hình giảng dạy nhóm đã chính thức được áp dụng cho việc giảng dạy kỹ năng nói cho khối sinh viên năm thứ nhất tại khoa tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Hà Nội. Bước đầu, mô hình triển khai còn tương đối nhỏ, với sự tham gia của ba chuyên gia thuộc tổ chức REI và hai giáo viên tổ Thực hành tiếng trong khoa tiếng Anh.

Sau hai học kỳ, mô hình đã nhận được sự phản hồi tích cực từ cả hai phía: sinh viên và giáo viên. Trong 12 lớp khối năm thứ nhất (A-06) có rất nhiều những phản hồi khác nhau về cả mặt tích cực và hạn chế trong chương trình, tuy nhiên, hầu hết sinh viên đều nhận thức được tiến bộ của bản thân về phát âm, ngữ điệu và đặc biệt là sự tự tin, khả năng phản ứng và suy luận logic trong quá trình giao tiếp. Những bài giảng và tiêu chí kiểm tra đánh giá nhất quán giúp giáo viên khách quan hơn trong quá trình xếp loại người học. Quan trọng hơn nữa, các giáo viên bản ngữ và giáo viên Việt Nam có điều kiện trao đổi và học hỏi kinh nghiệm lẫn nhau, bổ sung cho nhau trong quá trình làm việc.

Dù vẫn còn một số hạn chế, nhưng mô hình giảng dạy nhóm hứa hẹn là một mô hình làm việc tốt, đặc biệt là cho các giáo viên trẻ.

REPORT ON TEACHING THE SPEAKING SKILL FOR YEAR-ONE STUDENTS 2006-2007 ACADEMIC YEAR

Team teaching has long been proved to be effective and beneficial not only for the staffs but also for the learners. In the last two semesters (term 1 and term 2 of the

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academic year 2006-2007), a team teaching model has been applied in teaching the Speaking skill for first-year students in the English Department, Hanoi University (HANU). For each of the two terms, team members consist of 2 Vietnamese teachers from the English Department and 3 members of REI office in HANU. The project has proved to gained certain positive results.

I. Overview of Speaking Term 1 and Speaking Term 2

Topics and skills covered in Term 1

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Living in a family | 7. Love, dating, marriage |
| 2. Raising a family | 8. Describing appearance |
| 3. Homes | 9. Describing character |
| 4. Hobbies | 10. Jobs |
| 5. Shopping | 11. Job hunting |
| 6. Dining out | |

Topics and skills covered in Term 2

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Phone conversations | 7. Climate & Weather |
| 2. Education | 8. Environmental concerns |
| 3. Travel & Tourism | 9. Helping the poor |
| 4. Cooking & Dining out | 10. Geography & Natural wonders |
| 5. Health & Injuries | 11. Future dreams |
| 6. Crime & Punishment | 12. Giving directions |

Major differences between Term 1 & Term 2

1. Topics in Term 2 are of a more challenging nature.
2. The pronunciation focus in Term 2 is more of connected speech than individual sounds as in Term 1.

Similarities between Term 1 & Term 2

1. Consistency in the way homework is assigned
2. Writing at home acting as the basis for speaking in class
3. The similar focus on conversations of different kinds

II. Selected top class activities

Phone conversations: Telephone Tag

- Have Ss stand in 2 lines (Each line around 5 students only and the other students act the audience for cheering).
- Write the sentences down on a card.
- Instruct students to whisper the sentence to the next students.
- Whisper to the first student, and this student will then pass the sentences to the next one.
- After the sentence has been passed down the line, have the last student say the sentence and write both original and final sentences on whiteboard.
- Before starting remind students: WHISPER and say it only ONCE.

Here are some possible starter sentences:

- He's wearing his shirt inside out.
- Lan's wearing her skirt back to front.
- The snow lasted for 3 hours.

This activity is a lot of fun, with teacher and students laughing really hard when comparing the original version and the version given by the last student in the class. For example, in one class we had, the second sentence "*Lan's wearing her skirt back to front.*" became "*Lan's wearing her skirt back to France.*"

Travel & Tourism: Tourism group project

- Divide class into different groups of four and each group will act as a travel company. Each company will choose their name, a famous place in Vietnam (either historical or cultural or other beautiful place).
- Each group designs an itinerary of a two to three-day tour to that chosen place. The itinerary is written and distributed to all tourists visiting the "company". The tour is also illustrated by students' clothes, photos, pictures, and other special objects.
- Every member of the "company" must be able to act as a tour guide, to advertise the beauty of the destination, and introduce their tour schedule to a tourist.

- When all the companies are ready, teacher pick up one from each group to form a new group called the tourist group. This group will have to visit all the companies, asking questions and looking for their right tour.
- At the end of the lesson, all members in the tourist group vote for the company they feel pleased with (based on the issued criteria of service, quality, tour guide, etc.)
- The chosen one is the winner.

The activity enables students to become involved in the tourism industry, acting as real travel agencies and tourists. Besides, it helps improve students' creativity as well as encourage them to talk naturally about tourist destinations in Vietnam.

Future Dreams: *Drawing your life in the next 10 years*

Teacher asks students to draw their own pictures of what they see themselves in 10 years' time. Then invite several students to come to the front and talk about their pictures. (Note common responses such as "I imagine I'll..." or "I'll be working as..."). Students will normally find it quite surprising as they are not used to drawing as a way of communicating their ideas in English. This activity fits perfectly well with the topic, while at the same time motivates students to speak out about the future of their dreams.

Health & Injuries: *Simon says*

- "Simon" can be the teacher him/herself, or one of the best students in class after being instructed carefully by the teacher.
- Simon makes commands for the players to follow. The 'Simon' calls out instructions like this, "Simon says Touch your nose". Everyone else has to touch their nose.
- If the 'Simon' calls out an instruction without saying "Simon says" then everyone should ignore the instruction. In other words, when someone obeys the command that is not preceded by "Simon Says" he/she is out.
- If you don't follow a Simon says instruction you are also out.
- and the last person remaining is the winner.
- The level of difficulty can be raised by varying the verbs to be used, such as "hop", "pat", "rub", "wiggle", "tiptoe", or the body parts, such as "thigh", "hip", "palm", "nape", etc.

Language notes:

pat = continue hitting something very lightly (head or shoulder)

rub = move your hand back and forth across something (stomach)

wiggle = force something to move back and forth (esp. nose, fingers)

Crime & Punishment

- Based on the two cases given in the text book, set up a court (Or teacher can choose a new case).
- Teacher act as the judge
- 10 students act as the jury members
- One student will act as the defendant
- Two act as the attorneys
- Two act as the prosecutors
- One acts as the witness
- ...

N. B.: The roles of students depend on each case. Prosecutors and attorneys will try to give out evidence and proof to accuse or defend the accused, the jury members have to discuss on the verdict, to decide whether the defendant is guilty or innocent, and suggest a possible punishment.

The activity is fun, yet remains the spirit of the lesson. Students have a serious look at different crimes and offer reasonable punishments for each.

III. Testing and assessment**1. Mid-term speaking exams in the written form**

- Format: A written exam testing the lessons covered in half the speaking course
- Time: 45 minutes
- Focus on
 - making questions
 - word stress
 - sentence construction
 - word choice
- Weighting: 20% of the total mark

2. End-of-term oral exams

- Format: Students working in pairs for reading a dialogue, and working individually for answering their own questions

- Time: 15 minutes per pair
- Procedures:
 - Students read the dialogue in pairs.
 - Then each student selects a card from the multi-coloured stack. On the card, students will find a question about the topics in the Speaking book.
 - Teachers may ask follow-up questions to help students talk about the topic.
- Weighting: 70% of the total mark

IV. Weekly meetings: What is covered in each weekly meeting, & follow-up experience sharing emails

- Presley explains the lesson plan for the current week, which was already developed from previous years by some other American experts from REI-Vietnam.
- Other members contribute ideas if there is something that needs to be revised.
- Ideas are added during the group meetings and after them with follow-up emails to elaborate any further questions or raise new ideas.

V. What the course offers

1. What students say:

A survey was conducted in order to get students' responses to what they have learnt in Speaking term 1 and term 2. Totally 137 students from six A-06 classes participated in the survey (A1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10).

Generally, the majority have quite positive responses towards the speaking lessons that they have studied during term 1 and term 2. While 18% did not have any special impression about what they had experienced, more than half of the participants felt beneficial and one forth enjoyed the classes for their fun and informative contents.

Students' likes and dislikes

For those students who are fond of their speaking class, the activities are the part they feel the most excited (Table 1). The activities here involved pair or group discussions, role play, language games, group projects, etc. 65 out of 137 chose this answer in their questionnaires. A rather equal number of participants (56) appreciated the language knowledge which was carefully explained by their teachers. Vocabulary, communicative functions, sentence stress and thought groups, questions' intonations,

etc. are good examples of the language knowledge students practiced during their course.

Besides what they have learnt after speaking term 1+ 2, students also expressed their favor for their teachers and his/her teaching methods. 47 mentioned their teachers' teaching method as another attractive point along with topics, activities and language knowledge.

Communication and foreign teachers are two other elements that some participants stated in the reasons why they like their lessons.

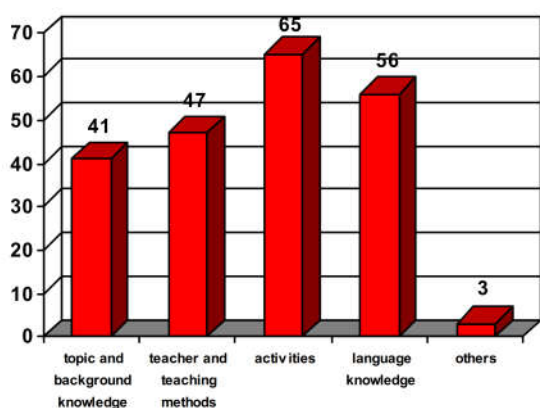


Table 1. Students' most favorite part in the lessons

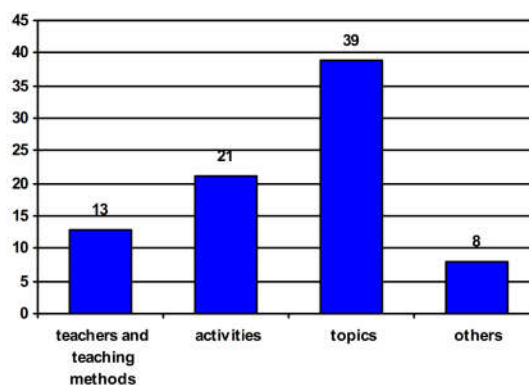


Table 2. Students' unsatisfactory part in the

Students' dissatisfaction was, however, found in the survey. It can be clearly observed that topics (12 topics in the textbook including: Travel and Tourism, Helping the Poor, Crime and Punishment, Environmental Concerns, etc.) did not make students happy (Table 2). 39 participants circle "topic" when being asked about what they dislike about the lessons. Instead of those, students suggested some issues which are, in their words, "students don't feel like they are talking all cliché" or "hotter and more familiar to students' daily life". Some of which can be listed as: fashion, love, culture, customs, stock market or political issues.

Besides, 21 out of 137 participated students complained about the activities in class and 13 objected to the teacher as well as his/her teaching methods. One student felt unpleasant with the atmosphere the teacher created, his/her imposing manner and another objected to teacher's unpunctuality. Other complaints fell to the lack of time for discussion, no chance for individual presentation, and lack of "extra knowledge".

Students' improvement after the course

In evaluating their own improvement after 2 terms, 52 and 34 participants thought that they had better stress and intonation and enriched their vocabulary about the topics respectively. 45 out of 137 students felt more confident when speaking in public and 38 improved their working skills with their friends in pairs or small and big groups. Besides, 2 other participants owned their faster and better reaction to teacher's question to the course, while two others claimed to have better fluency. These are very encouraging results not only for the students themselves, but also for the teachers and syllabus designers.

Students' suggestions for improvement

Besides the suggestions for more related and favorite topics, the students also hope to continue and increase the number of class activities (pair, group) and fun games; for example: tourism exhibition, court, group project, giving direction, future drawing, etc.

Along with fun class activities and better topics, many other students expressed their hope to have more chance and more time for speaking. 45 students circle the choice of more chance for discussion. Particularly, some of them illustrated their choice with more specific details. For example, more than one stated their desire to have more chance to present individually in front of class (not only answer teacher's questions in groups). Another suggested teacher find better ways of discussion to avoid off-topic chitchatting. Additional included needs for daily communication, informal English speaking and illustrations or examples for each topic.

Fewer students wished for more vocabulary and very few look for more homework. (One possible reason is that they already have weekly vocabulary and background preparation before each lesson and three big tasks a term.)

2. What teachers say:

A good team-teaching model

A. Consistency

On-going discussion and co-planning during weekly meetings helped promote consistency in not only making lesson plans, but also constructing scoring system and criteria. Having the same lesson plan, teachers are able to keep tracks with other colleagues and make sure they have covered all the needed parts. The chance that students are tested what they have not been taught will never happen when all team

members co-plan their lesson. More importantly, when all the teachers agree on the scoring system (10% for homework, 20% for mid-term and 70% for final test), and scoring criteria (pronunciation, content, grammar and fluency) and work together to assign the same homework, make the same mid-term test, and design the same interview questions, they will sure be able to evaluate their students in the same fair way. This consistency is very essential, especially when there are too many classes a time.

B. Cooperation and Sharing

The core spirit of team work in general is always cooperation. This is also true in this case. Not a single person is perfect, nor is a teacher. Native teachers from REI office are experienced teachers with perfect language knowledge and brilliant teaching skills. On the other hand, Vietnamese teachers of ED are creative, energetic and have good understanding of the strength and weaknesses of Vietnamese students. Thus, while Vietnamese colleagues consult English native speakers on various language issues e.g. a good choice of words, a correct pronunciation, an appropriate tones used in formal and informal communication, American teachers count on their Vietnamese fellows as well. Vietnamese students' reaction towards foreign teachers, their behaviour in class, an equivalent meaning of English words, proper manners in class are not always easily understood by foreign teachers working in other countries. Therefore, a complement is needed among the team.

However, cooperation and sharing are not only necessary between native teachers and foreign teachers. It should be lying between and among anyone of each member in the team. As each person has his own strength and ability, the teamwork can be much better when her creativity meets his experience, when this understanding is combined with that initiative. Besides experiences and ideas, teaching materials, good books, illustrative pictures, good activities and games, etc. are also shared among teachers.

C. Updated Adjustment

There are always complaints for any textbook, however well it is designed and appropriately it is selected. Similar things happen with discussion topics and activities applied in class. In order to minimize that, in each weekly meeting, teachers teaching the same subject can have a perfect chance to exchange information, to share their success and failure. They will all work together to analyze the reasons of failure and to

multiple success. By doing this, all teachers will learn from failure and be sure to have better adjustment for their latter lesson plans.

This, unfortunately, has not been popular before as people (especially Asian) tend to hide their failure (for scare of shame) as well as success (as proof of modesty). The habit somehow isolated teachers and prevented colleagues from sharing and cooperating.

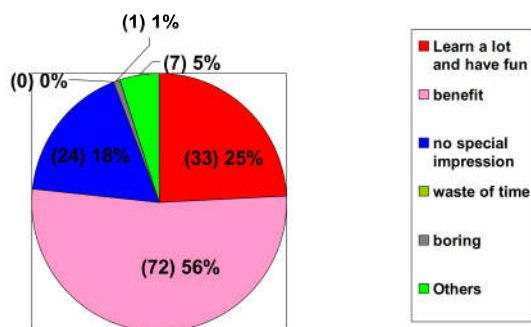
Words in sum: A good working environment

"For the last one year working on a weekly basis with foreign and Vietnamese colleagues, I have seen myself grown in different aspects. It was the first time ever in my teaching profession, I had felt the overwhelming power of team work in getting things done in English language teaching and learning. It is cooperation. It is commitments. It is co-teaching. It is co-learning. It is indeed give and take. I especially thank Presley for a lot of sharing and for his allowing me to be in his class as an observer. A great model in delivering lessons in a very serious and humorous way at the same time. Thank you!"

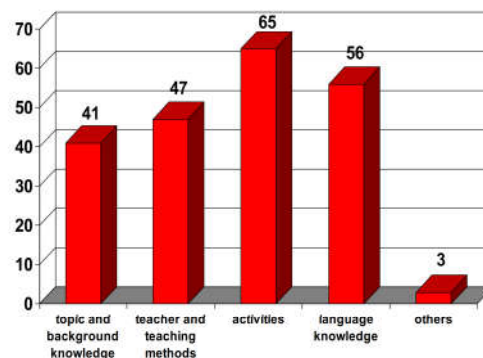
(Nguyen Van Anh)

Appendix No. 1:

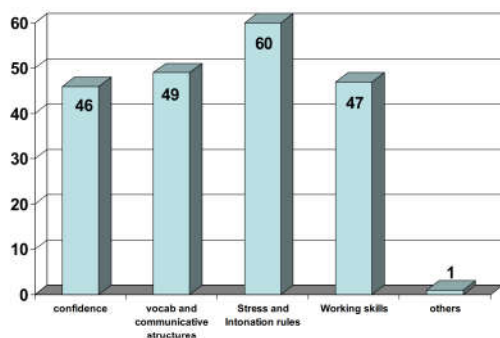
Students' general attitude



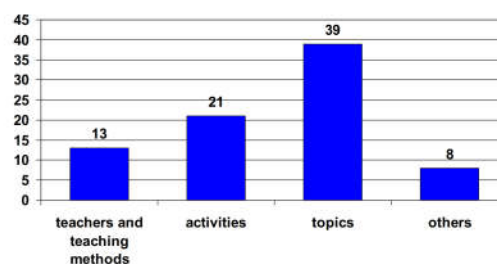
Most favorite part of the lesson



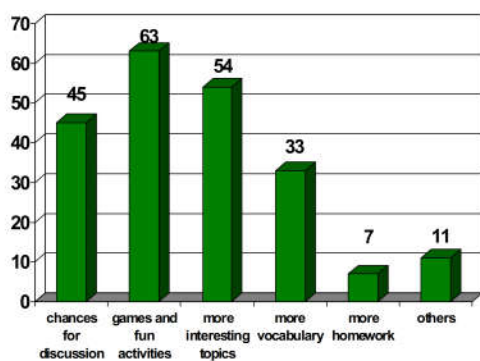
Most beneficial part



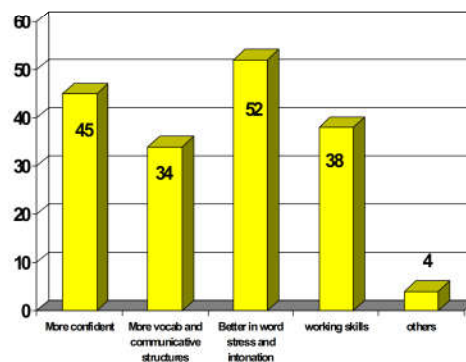
Students' dissatisfaction



Students' recommendations for improvement



Students' improvement after Speaking term 1+2



Appendix No. 2: Survey Questionnaire

Please choose the answers which most closely match your experiences of your speaking lessons in term 1 and term 2.

1. *How do you feel about your Speaking lessons in term 1 and 2?*

- a. I like them a lot because I learn many things and we have a lot of fun.
- b. I think they are good and I benefit from them.
- c. I do not have any special impression on them.
- d. I don't like them much because they are such a waste of time.
- e. I really don't like them because they are boring.
- f. Other (please specify).....

IF YOU DO LIKE THEM:

2. *What do you like most about the lessons?(choose as many as apply)*

- a. The topics and background knowledge.
- b. The teachers and his/her teaching methods.
- c. The activities (pair/group discussion, games, role play, etc.)
- d. The language knowledge (vocabulary, structure, stress and intonation rules, etc.)
- g. Other (please specify).....

3. *How do you benefit from the lessons? (choose as many as apply)*

- a. Confidence while speaking in front of a group or class
- b. Vocabulary and Communicative structures
- c. Stress and Intonation Rules
- d. Working skill (Pair work, group work, etc.)
- h. Other (please specify).....

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THEM:

4. *What don't you like about the lessons? (choose as many as apply)*

- a. The topics
- b. Teachers and his/her teaching methods
- c. The activities
- d. Other (please specify)

BOTH

5. *What do you recommend to improve the lessons? (choose as many as apply)*

- a. More chances for discussion
- b. More games and fun activities
- i. More interesting topics (please specify).....
- c. More vocabulary for each topics
- d. More homework
- j. Others (Please specify).....

6. *In what areas has your speaking improved because of Speaking term 1 and term 2? (choose as many as apply)*

- a. Confidence while speaking in front of a group or class
- b. Vocabulary and Communicative structures
- c. Stress and Intonation Rules
- d. Working skill (Pair work, group work, etc.)
- e. Other (please specify).....