LEARNING GUIDES IN SPEAKING ENGLISH IN IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR VIETNAMESE FIRST -YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the level of English language performance and the extent of participation of students in in-class activities of the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University to propose learning guides in speaking English for in-class activities. The respondents of the study were four hundred (400) students coming from colleges of Thai Nguyen University. The results were computed and analyzed using the descriptive method to give the findings. Weighted mean was used to determine the levels of language performance of the students and the extent of participation of using English in in-class activities. The study was revealed that the level of English language performance of freshman students of Thai Nguyen University was on the average only. Additionally, the extent of participation of using English in in-class activities was high on reading and speaking; writing was deliberate as communication barriers in terms of in-class activities and a proposed learning guide was formulated to enhance students English speaking. Based on the findings of the study, some implications were suggested and recommendations were made for further research.

Key words: *learning guide, speaking skill, in-class activities, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnamese first-year students*

INTRODUCTION

English language is a global language which is used for communication with native-speakers and non-native-speakers in the world, especially in the education sector, all university students need it in their studies in order to search information and obtain knowledge. Due to requirements including increasing foreign companies, expanding international trading relations and the growing tourist industry and number of students undertaking overseas study, English is now taught not only in general education levels and university levels but also in most foreign language centers. This means that the needs and requirements of English language learners have changed. In the past, students only wanted to be good at grammar and gain as much vocabulary as possible so that they could read, understand and even write in English. Nowadays, English is needed for daily communication and employment.

Students who enter university lacking the English competency necessary to pursue their studies effectively can suffer anxiety, frustration, de-motivation and an inability to engage with the learning process. Professional courses that involve work placements, such as education, pharmacy and nursing, can be particularly problematic and result in high levels of student stress and even expulsion if they are unable to meet the communicative demands involved. Students facing these kinds of situations may ultimately opt to withdraw from their studies, a decision which can carry with it the stigma of —failure within their families and/or cultures and thus represent a source of real trauma.

At Thai Nguyen University, students are facing two problems when they learn English. First, university students continue to make some basic errors in pronunciation, spelling, morphology and syntax. Second, they are unable to express themselves confidently and efficiently either when dealing with 'academic topics' or 'common

everyday topics'. The students' major difficulty arises from the fact that they cannot use English correctly and appropriately in and out the classroom when required to do so. This means that the difficulty is related to the students' deficiencies in communicative competence and self-expression.

The university can enhance students learning by using its existing resources more effectively. The key tasks in transcending the artificial boundaries between in-class learning activities are to break down the barriers between various units (e.g., academic departments, administrative services, student affairs) and to create situations in which students examine the connections between their studies and life outside the classroom and to apply what they are learning. Key steps are for universities to address the importance of in-class experiences explicitly in the institution's mission, develop a common understanding of the desired outcomes of undergraduate education and the combination of institutional conditions and student experiences most likely to produce these outcomes, assess regularly the impact of in-class environments on students.

SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS
Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study comprised of four hundred college students selected through random sampling out of 8,844 total populations of the five colleges at Thai Nguyen University. The students were currently enrolled in a first -year English course or had taken a freshman English course in the previous semester. The sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula with 0.05 margin of error and each college was represented by the obtained sample size using stratified proportional allocation. Table 1 presents the distribution of samples.

Table -1: Distribution of Student Samples by Colleges (N = 400)

Colleges	Class	Population	Sample	Percentage
College of Education	36	2,200	100	25%
College of Information Technology	22	1,300	59	15%
College of Agriculture and Forestry	41	2,500	113	28%
College of Sciences	23	1,400	63	16%
College of Economics and Business Administration	26	1,444	65	16%
Total		**8,844**	**400**	**100%**

Research methods

The study is a survey on English language performance and the extent of participation in in-class activities for Vietnamese first-year students at Thai Nguyen University. As such, the study use the descriptive research method. This type of research method aims to present situations or conditions in a particular place or area. The descriptive method is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The principles objectives in employing this method are "to describe the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of particular phenomena" [1].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Level of English Language Performance of the Students

The English language performance of the students were determined through a teacher -made test and was developed by a group of English lecturers at the Centre for Human Resource Development for Foreign Language Studies at Thai Nguyen University. Language competence refers to the knowledge of a language, cognitive aspect in learning a language, and of course the ability to use that language to produce meaningful production and language performance. Competence is used to describe the learner's capacity to produce a language. Students' competencies show that perceptions and judgments of students about their own learning abilities, skills, or competencies, affect their academic roles, performances, and proficiencies particularly in learning foreign language in the classrooms.

In assessing the performance, the obtained scores were grouped subjectively to describe the level of language performance in English first -year college students at Thai Nguyen University in grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing. The equivalent of the scores using a scale was presented below.

Table -2: Level of English Language Performance of the Students

Components	Rating
Grammar	1.31
Reading	0.90
Vocabulary	1.34
Writing	2.59
Total Performance	**6.15**

The over-all performance was 6.15 and rated as Average only. It was found out from the result that among the four skills, writing got the highest rating, followed by vocabulary and grammar. This only shows that students at Thai Nguyen University excel more on writing. They were able to express their ideas in English rather than other skills. This also proves that writing is one way of providing variety in classroom activities. It provides a learner with physical evidence of his achievements and he can measure his improvement. It helps students to consolidate their grasp of vocabulary and structure, and complements the other language skills. It can also foster the learner's ability to summarize and to use the language freely. Similarly, vocabulary is the cornerstone of English skills. Without a large vocabulary, even the best understanding of English grammar will not allow someone to speak English. Memorizing vocabulary may not be a favorite activity but there are plenty of creative ways to make it more fun.

Advanced writing skills are an important aspect of academic performance as well as of subsequent work-related performance. However, American students rarely attain advanced scores on assessments of writing skills. In order to achieve higher levels of writing performance, the working memory demands of writing processes should be reduced so that executive attention is free to coordinate interactions among them[2].

This only shows that English proficiency requires students to learn four skills, namely receptive skills (which involve listening and reading) and productive skills (which involve speaking and writing). Generally, students who are confused in learning grammar find speaking class to be more interesting as teachers focus more on meaning rather than on form. Both Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) syllabuses basically have the same principle in relation to this matter.

2. Students' Extent of Participation in In-Class Activities
2.1. In-Class Activities in Terms of Listening

Table below shows the extent of participation in in-class activities in terms of listening. In real life, a listener usually has the advantage of visual cues that establish both the context and the respective roles of the participants in a conversation. Our understanding of the conversation might be considerably assisted by facial expressions and visual cues. [3]

Table -3: Extent of Participation of Students in In-Class Activities in Terms of Listening

As a student	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I listen to English songs and sing them afterwards.	2.24	Rarely	2
2. I listen to poem recitations in English and recite them myself.	1.44	Never	5
3. I listen to English story – telling and try to tell stories in English too.	1.85	Rarely	4
4. I listen to debates in English and participate in	2.32	Rarely	3

debates.			
5. I listen to classmates speaking English and speak to them in English too.	3.08	Sometimes	1
Composite Mean	**2.18**	**Rarely**	

The over-all assessment of the students on their extent of participation to in-class activities in terms of listening was rarely with a composite mean of 2.18. Among the items enumerated, "I listen to classmates speaking English and speak to them in English too" got the highest mean score of 3.08 and verbally interpreted as Sometimes. This only implies that students are conversationalist and able to express ideas in English. Also, they were considered a good listener and can easily adapt to the situation. The students also practice the correct way of talking to person so that both parties can understand what they want to say or express. Listening comprehension is more than just hearing what is being said. It is the learner's ability to understand the meaning of the words he hears and to relate them to each other in some way. When they hear something for instance in an event, a good listening comprehension helps them to understand it, to recall it, to discuss it later, and even to retell it for others. Listening comprehension is an important skill to develop and is crucial even at early ages, since good listeners become good communicators in the future. the total time people spend on communication: 45 percent is on listening, 30 percent on speaking, 16 percent on reading, and 9 percent on writing. [4]

It was followed by "listen to English songs and sing them afterwards, listen to debates in English and participate in debates and listen to English story – telling and try to tell stories in English too". This only proves that students find it hard to listen to English songs since it is difficult for them to understand some of the words. These items were verbally assessed as rarely only. Although everybody has had courses in speaking, writing, and reading; still very few people have ever been taught to be an effective listener.

The students never listen to poem recitations in English and recite them by themselves which got the lowest mean value of 1.44. The study confirmed that students at Thai Nguyen University do not show much interest in studying English poetry. If they have a chance to select between English Poetry and some other courses, most of them would rather like some other courses, instead of English Poetry. Hence, how to create a better atmosphere of learning and develop the pleasure of learning in the classroom is an utmost concern in the teaching of poetry. Poetry can function as a media between the poet and the reader; it can also function as a media between the teacher and students.[5]. If teachers of English poetry can find a good way to increase students' interest in learning poetry, both teachers and students will like this "magic media". If teachers can employ active ways to teach students, they will find learning English poetry enjoyable while teachers will find that teaching poetry is no longer a burden.

In spite of the low assessment of the students at Thai Nguyen University, listening is still one of the means of language communication they used in their daily lives. Giving the learners a lot of listening activities is a good way of enlarging their vocabulary and helps the learners improve their listening comprehension. With this, training and practicing listening is not a day's work alone.

2.2. In-Class Activities in Terms of Speaking

It can be viewed from the table the extent of participation of students in in-class activities in terms of speaking. To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression. However, quantity alone will not necessarily produce competent speakers. Instructors need to combine structured output activities, which allow for error correction and increased accuracy, with communicative output activities that give students opportunities to practice language use more freely.

Table -4: Extent of Participation of Students in In-Class Activities in Terms of Speaking

As a student	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I share English news in class discussion.	2.23	Rarely	5
2. I participate in English conversations/dialogue.	2.55	Sometimes	3
3. I participate in role-play in English lessons.	2.41	Rarely	4
4. I participate in debates with my friends or my teacher in English.	2.72	Sometimes	1

5. I participate in oriented – discussion.	2.70	Sometimes	2
Composite Mean	**2.52**	**Sometimes**	

Table 4 shows the extent of participation of students in in-class activities in terms of speaking. The composite mean was 2.52 and verbally interpreted as sometimes. "I participate in debates with my friends or my teacher in English, participate in oriented – discussion and participate in English conversations/dialogue were on the top of the rank with 2.72, 2.70 and 2.55 respectively and all verbally interpreted "sometimes". Though this is not their native language, they still able to communicate and participate in the discussion by using English language. Speaking is one of language skills that must be mastered by any foreign language learner, because speaking is an essential tool for communicating, thinking and learning [6]. However, it is not easy to master speaking skill, there are many problems in learning speaking skill: (1) the limited opportunities for the students to speak in class, (2) the lack of variation of teaching techniques used by some teachers in class, (3) the teaching strategy application was monotonous that made the students bored and disinterested in studying English.

Considering the problems above, improving students speaking skill is a challenging part of teacher's job. The teacher is expected to have effective teaching techniques to provide students with appropriate teaching materials and to create positive classroom environment. Therefore, the students will have an opportunity to use English among themselves [6]. Also, the teachers should provide their students with a sense of security and encourage them to voice their opinion. Once the students are not afraid and humiliated when they talk, they will take part in the class willingly and do well in the second language acquisition.

Speaking activities such as "I participate in role-play in English lessons (2.41), and I share English news in class discussion" (2.23) got the least weighted mean score and interpreted as "rarely" only. This only shows that students were not interested on these activities and find it boring inside the classroom. But it is not focused only on the students because in the typical college classroom a small handful of students make the vast majority of comments. Traditional classroom speaking practice often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and another gives an answer. The question and the answer are structured and predictable, and often there is only one correct, predetermined answer. The purpose of asking and answering the question is to demonstrate the ability to ask and answer the question. To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression.

Though increasing participation is an obvious goal in courses that include frequent discussions and small-group work, it is also important in a lecture course. In short, if only a few students participate by volunteering answers, asking questions, or contributing to discussions, class sessions become to some extent a lost opportunity to assess and promote learning. Ideally, the goal of increasing participation is not to have every student participate in the same way or at the same rate. Instead, it is to create an environment in which all participants have the opportunity to learn and in which the class explores issues and ideas in depth, from a variety of viewpoints.

2.3. In-Class Activities in Terms of Reading

Table 5 shows the extent of participation of the students in in-class activities in terms of reading. The over-all participation of the students is interpreted as "sometimes" with composite mean of 3.20.

Table -5: Extent of Participation of Students in In-Class Activities in Terms of Reading

As a student	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I read English texts loudly	3.20	Sometimes	2
2. I read English texts silently	3.06	Sometimes	3
3. I read English stories/ novels	1.74	Rarely	4
4. I read English poems	1.66	Rarely	5
5. I read new words loudly in class	3.60	Often	1
Composite Mean	**3.20**	**Sometimes**	

Among the items under reading activity, students read new words loudly in class ranked first with a mean value of 3.60. This indicates that students were not disgrace when they read loudly in class since this is a form of showing enthusiasm to the lesson. It also means that they know how to accept correction whenever they pronounce it wrong. However, the students often use this method since they can easily express and say it without showing their

emotions and even think. In addition to reading, more topics of relevance to reading comprehension are identified. An article regarding the idea of close reading state, "A typical college students is unable to deeply comprehend what he or she reads. Most students have few if any intellectual tools that would enable them to read deeply, and then apply what they have read" [7].

In addition, reading is an important way of gaining information in language learning and it is a basic skill for a language learner. There are a lot of reading exercises even in examinations nowadays that must be done in limited time so learners are asked to read comprehensively at a certain speed. Items such as read English texts loudly and read English texts silently were sometimes participated by the students. With this, they use the skills they already possess in reading (silently and loudly) and writing to help improve their listening and speaking capabilities. This only shows that reading skills allied with listening and speaking activities, greater progress in developing oral fluency could be achieved.

On the other hand, "I read English stories/ novels (1.74) and I read English poems" (1.66) obtained the lowest mean score. This was observed since most of the students were not able to appreciate what they read and find it difficult to understand the meaning of the stories and poems.

2.4. In-Class Activities in Terms of Writing

Table 6 shows the extent of participation of students' in in-class activities in terms of writing.

Table - 6: Extent of Participation of Students in In-Class Activities in Terms of Writing

As a student	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I write English journal about everyday experiences.	1.65	Rarely	3
2. I write reaction papers and share it in in-class activity.	1.58	Rarely	4
3. I write news in English as a classroom activity.	1.70	Rarely	2
4. I write English short stories about adventures.	1.57	Rarely	5
5. I write letters in English.	2.01	Rarely	1
Composite Mean	**1.70**	**Rarely**	

Based on the result, the over-all assessment of the students on writing activities was 1.70 and verbally rated as rarely. It was observed that among the four skills, writing got the least value. All items were "rarely" performed by the students though write letters in English ranked first with weighted mean score of 2.01. This only shows that students find it difficult to write letters in English. This may be due to the fact that they can express what they say and can't able to write the correct words because of its spelling. Students may write in longer syntactic units without fundamental step, they are prone to make unnecessary errors because they were not able to codify their knowledge. They have no way to check their writing unless they know grammatical terms and skilled in using such.

It was followed by writing news in English as a classroom activity, writing English journal about everyday experiences, writing reaction papers and sharing it in in-class activity and writing English short stories about adventures is 1.70, 1.65, 1.58 and 1.57 respectively. All of these items were verbally assessed as rarely also. Everybody in college hates papers. Students hate writing them so much that they buy, borrow, or steal them instead. Plagiarism is now so common place that if every student who did it is flunked, there would be a worse attrition rate in schools. And on those rare occasions undergraduates do deign to compose their own essays, said exegetic masterpieces usually take them all of half an hour at 4 a.m. to write, and consist accordingly of "arguments" that are at best tangentially related to the coursework, font-manipulated to meet the minimum required page-count. [8]

Almost all respondents noted a degree of dissatisfaction with their use of English in their professional writing. This varied from issues of formal correctness, such as article and punctuation use, and stylistic issues such as the use of passive voice and long sentences, to more complex areas such as tone, richness and idiomaticity. The higher level features of language used were considered important to the respondents as, in their words. [9]

2.5. Summary Table on the Extent of Participation of Students in In-Class Activities

Table below presents the summary on the extent of participation of the students in in-class activities. Students at Thai Nguyen University give their full effort to speak in English even though it is difficult in their part. They academically participate into different activities that will help them to develop their communication skills.

Table -7: Summary Table on the Extent of Participation of Students   in In-Class Activities

In-class activities	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Listening	2.18	Rarely	3
2. Speaking	2.52	Sometimes	2
3. Reading	3.20	Sometimes	1
4. Writing	1.70	Rarely	4
Composite Mean	**2.40**	**Rarely**	

As seen from the result, it was observed that reading and speaking was at times used and takes part in in-class activities while listening and writing were rarely used.

Communicating in any language is all about imitating other people. People want to be able to speak like native speakers do. Before a person can form his/her own correct sentences, he/she first needs to see lots of similar ones in the language they are learning. When somebody speaks in their native language, they do not have to think about the grammar or the words they use as correct sentences just come to them automatically. In fact, the brain uses sentences that people already read or heard. If someone wants to speak a foreign language fluently, they have to learn it the way they learned their native language by massive input.

Furthermore, reading and listening will help develop language intuition as it is all about putting a lot of correct sentences in the brain. With this, the brain can imitate them; producing similar sentences to express the meaning they want. When someone read and listen a lot, paying attention to useful vocabulary, he/she will soon start to use new words and phrases in speaking and writing and not only that, the person also will develop language intuition.

3. Communication Barriers in In-class Activities

Communication is an important part of teaching because the students have to be able to understand the message that the teacher is trying to convey. Students also have to be able to communicate effectively with each other. There are a number of factors in the classroom (and many of these factors exist in day-to-day life as well) that can act as barriers to effective communication.

3.1. Difficulty Encountered in In-Class Activities in Terms of Listening

Table below presents the difficulties encountered by the students in in-class activities with regards to listening. Though students were able to participate to different in-class activities, they still encountered difficulties. These difficulties were observed on their communication skills particularly in listening. The result was presented below with corresponding interpretation.

Table - 8: Difficulty Encountered in In-class Activities in Terms of Listening

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I listen to English songs and sing them afterwards.	2.10	Less Difficult	4
2. I listen to poem recitations in English and recite them myself.	3.02	Difficult	2
3. I listen to English story – telling and try to tell stories in English too.	3.47	Difficult	1
4. I listen to debates in English and participate in debates.	3.00	Difficult	3
5. I listen to classmates speaking English and speak to them in English too.	2.05	Less Difficult	5

Composite Mean	**2.73**	**Difficult**	

It was observed that students in general assessed the level of difficulty in in-class activities with regards to listening as "difficult" with a composite mean of 2.73.

Among the items cited, they find it difficult to listen to English story – telling and try to tell stories in English too. This obtained the highest weighted mean score of 3.47. This indicates that students find it hard to express what they heard and what they learned when reading stories. This is in connection with the result on the table that this item was rarely participated by the students. However, the result is in contradiction in one of the study that the importance of such activities is underlined by who affirms 'The lively atmosphere and real life environment created by activities such as stories encourage the students to talk and discuss with each other. Besides, many stories can be adopted into short plays and learners enjoy performing'[9]. In addition, listen to poem recitations in English and recite them myself and listen to debates in English and participate in debates were also found to be difficult to them.

On the other hand, items which were verbally interpreted "less difficult" were listen to English songs and sing them afterwards (2.10) and listen to classmates speaking English and speak to them in English too (2.05). This is because they can be fun of listening to English music because they were stunned with the melody of the song which turn them to sing it. In addition, talking to their foreign classmates in person makes them more comfortable even though the pronunciation is not correct.

3.2. Difficulty Encountered in In-Class Activities in Terms of Speaking

Table below presents the difficulties encountered in participating in-class activity like speaking.

Table -9: Difficulty Encountered in In-class Activities in Terms of Speaking

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I share English news in class discussion.	2.08	Less Difficult	1
2. I participate in English conversations/dialogue.	1.57	Less Difficult	4
3. I participate in role-play in English lessons.	1.56	Less Difficult	5
4. I participate in debates with my friends or my teacher in English.	2.02	Less Difficult	3
5. I participate in oriented – discussion.	2.05	Less Difficult	2
Composite Mean	**1.86**	**Less Difficult**	

As seen from the result, the over-all assessment of the respondents on the difficulties encountered in in-class activities was less difficult with a composite mean of 1.86. All items were rated less difficult, however, "I share English news in class discussion" ranked first with a weighted mean score of 2.08. This only implies that the students still find it difficult to share or report news in class especially when they will deliver it in English. Students' find some difficulty in summarizing the thought of the news in English. Students are reluctant to speak inside and outside classroom in the target language, they feel afraid of using English outside class, and in some way, they are unenthusiastic to use English inside classroom, This situation presented in the English classroom that how private universities in Bangladesh are helping students to acquire communicative skills and also to improve higher education standards of English, since the government acquired a new methodology in order to teach English in all the private and public universities throughout the country.[10]

3.3. Difficulty Encountered in In-Class Activities in Terms of Reading

Table 10 shows the difficulties experienced by the students in engaging to in-class activity such as reading. When reading stories, articles and the like, readers are interactors who could smoothly use their own native language for developing concepts in interaction with the author's ideas. They employ their knowledge well even if they may not understand what they are reading.

Table -10: Difficulty Encountered in In-class Activities in Terms of Reading

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank

1. I read English texts loudly.	1.68	Less Difficult	4
2. I read English texts silently.	1.65	Less Difficult	5
3. I read English stories/ novels.	2.90	Difficult	2
4. I read English poems.	3.34	Difficult	1
5. I read new words loudly in class.	1.71	Less Difficult	3
Composite Mean	**2.26**	**Less Difficult**	

As reflected in the table, it can be observed that the over-all assessment of the students on the difficulties encountered in reading is less difficult with a composite mean value of 2.26. This indicates that reading is still one of the important activities for students because it is the chosen instrument to widen their knowledge. This is because various English printed materials in the school are available for students to read while opportunities to speak, listen and write are not common in their daily life.

"I read English poems" and "I read English stories/ novels" were the two items which were found to be difficult. This was observed since it obtained the highest mean value of 3.34 and 2.90 respectively. This was observed since students find it difficult to get the main idea on the poem that their reading as well as making inference. This can also be observed since sometimes the students are not given enough time for reading.

Other items were found to be less difficult such as read new words loudly in class, read English texts loudly and read English texts silently.

3.4. Difficulty Encountered in In-Class Activities in Terms of Writing

Table below shows the different areas where students experienced difficulties in writing a journal, novel, stories and others.

Table -11: Difficulty Encountered in In-class Activities in Terms of Writing

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I write English journal about everyday experiences.	3.36	Difficult	4
2. I write reaction papers and share it in in-class activity.	3.47	Difficult	1
3. I write news in English as a classroom activity.	3.45	Difficult	2
4. I write English short stories about adventures.	3.44	Difficult	3
5. I write letters in English.	2.24	Less Difficult	5
Composite Mean	**3.19**	**Difficult**	

It can be gleaned from the result that writing reaction papers and share it in in-class activity topped on the ranked with a weighted mean score of 3.47. This was verbally interpreted as difficult. Among the items cited, they find it difficult to write English journal, reaction papers, news in English and English short stories. This obtained the highest weighted mean score of 3.47. This indicates that students find it hard to express what they learned. This is in connection with the result on the table that this item was rarely participated by the students.

3. 5. Summary Table on the Difficulty Encountered in In-Class Activities

Table below presents the summary table on the difficulties encountered by the students in in-class activities.

Table -12: Summary Table on the Difficulty Encountered in In-class Activities

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank

1.	Listening	2.73	Difficult	2
2.	Speaking	1.86	Less Difficult	4
3.	Reading	2.26	Less Difficult	3
4.	Writing	3.19	Difficult	1
Composite Mean		**2.51**	**Difficult**	

It was ruminated that writing is one of the communication barriers when it comes to in-class activities. This was observed from the obtained mean value of 3.19 and verbally interpreted as difficult. It was followed by listening with 2.73 and rated difficult also. This means that students have no complete environment for communication. That is why their listening and writing skills are poor and the students become frustrated. Writing and listening are the language skills which learners usually find the most difficult. This often is because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word. Words constitute the most frequently used tool for communicating. Words usually facilitate communication; however, their careless, improper use in a given situation can create a communication barrier. The result affirmed that the largest barrier inherent to written communication is the lack of available body language or vocal intonation when reading or otherwise engaging with written communication. It is easy to misinterpret a written comment when it is in fact completely innocuous.

4. Learning Guides in Speaking English for In-class Activities

Based on findings of this study, the learning guides in speaking English in in- class activities for the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University was conceptualized by the researcher.

In-Class Activities For Teachers
1. Building up an open and pleasant learning climate
2. Expanding learners' autonomy
3. "English Day" in the class
4. Keeping of Journals on English learning
5. Human dictionary
6. English Wall
7. A Worldwide Cooking Tour
8. Annual English Class Festival
9. English Music Motivation Game
10. Poem Recitation Day
11. English News Day
12. Role Play
13. Reading English Stories
14. Writing an Adventure Anecdote
Exercises For Students
1. Poem Recitation
2. English News Day
3. Role Play

| 4. Story Reading |
| 5. Adventure Anecdote |

In education, student engagement in different activities such as in-class activities has grown in popularity resulting to an increased understanding of the role that certain intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical and social factors play in the learning process. Students on their part are willing to participate in routine school activities, such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class.

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their educational activities and get the opportunity to think about and apply what they learn in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems and do things together or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community and their personal lives.

Curricular or in-class activities are those that are carried out inside the classroom, in the laboratory or in the workshop and have reference to the prescribed courses. These activities are a part of the over-all instructional program. There is the full involvement of the teaching staff in these activities, though these activities are ungraded and students do not earn any credit.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The results of the study indicated that the level of English language performance of freshman students at Thai Nguyen University was on the average only. Besides, the extent of participation of using English in in-class activities was high on reading and speaking. Writing was deliberate as communication barriers in terms of in -class activities; therefore, a proposed learning guide was formulated to enhance students English speaking.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations are suggested. Firstly, English lecturers may undergo training and must be equipped with modern teaching methodologies so as to increase the eeffectiveness of English language teaching.

Secondly, sstudents should be encouraged to watch and listen to English news like CNN, BBC, DD news etc… and English serials/movies in TV/Radio so as to learn right pronunciation of various words and develop their listening skill. Thirdly, students should be given enough practice to face interviews by conducting mock interviews to build their confidence in spoken communication. Dramatization technique can be used to improve spoken English skills. Moreover, students should be encouraged to write letters to their friends in English. It motivates them to use complete English words to communicate using SMS by mobiles phones outside the college hours so as to improve written communication skill of the students. Fourthly, the University Management Committee should take necessary steps and keen interest towards above activities so as to develop communication skills of students. The management may form a system for "teacher-student" and "student-teacher" evaluation process for the improvement in achievement of the above objectives. Next, the faculty may use verbal and non-verbal cues to encourage participation. Finally, faculty may structure assignments that require students to illustrate how they are using class material in other areas of their lives, use active learning and other effective pedagogical strategies, hold students to high expectations, and indicate clearly what they must do to succeed academically.

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