

Research Article

HOW REDUCING STRESS AND ANXIETY HELPS TO INCREASE THE LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

* Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha MA; Le My Thu MA; Nguyen Thuy Ngoc MA; Hoang Thi Anh Nguyet MA; Hoang Thi Oanh MA

UNETI – Hanoi - Vietnam

Received 28th August 2020; Accepted 11th October 2020; Published online 25th January 2021

ABSTRACT

A common problem for Vietnamese teachers is dealing with stress and anxiety in the language classroom. Vietnamese second language teachers are often faced with the challenging tasks of making the classes meaningful, practical and even fun for the students. Several of the researcher's colleagues who teach English the PPU (The People's Police University) agree that their Vietnamese students seem nervous and are afraid of speaking English in class. Vietnamese students are very reluctant to question ideas or to express their opinions or individual preferences. Many teachers believe these factors are interrelated and can be explained by a cultural deference to authority that results in an anxious climate and passive learning in the language classroom.

Keywords: reducing stress, anxiety, cultural deference, speaking English, language classroom.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, Vietnamese students, according to Do (1999, p.12), are taught to view their teachers as the embodiment of knowledge, and the authority and control that teachers exercise can deter students from freely expressing their opinions. In this firmly established teacher-centered system, it is often offensive for the students to contradict the teacher's point of view. This unequal classroom relationship is often seen as a cultural disposition. However, along with Little wood (2000, p.33), it is believed that if students display passive classroom attitudes, it is more likely to be a consequence of the educational contexts that have been or are now provided for them, than of any inherent dispositions of the students themselves. Rinvoluceri (1984) also discovers that teachers' judgment toward their students in the classroom can bring in the problem of anxiety and stress. Teachers may not realize it, but they are often judgmental toward their students in the classroom. They may show approval or disapproval verbally as well as by their body language. Some teachers who openly ridicule the students and others who praise them without smiling or making eye contact, thus make their positive reinforcement seem insincere and negative. Holliday (1994) affirms that explicit criticism such as error correction can also help increase the students' anxiety. Whether the teacher corrects the error explicitly, by providing the correction, or implicitly, by indicating the kind of error and not giving the student the opportunity for self-correction, can make students understand that they are not capable of self-correction; especially when the teacher answers her own questions before the students have a chance to do so, a very common classroom practice. It is not surprising that the weak students, who need more positive feedback than their more proficient ones, get less time (and the teacher's patience) to answer than the high achievers in the class, which leads to the tense classroom climate for the weak students. It stands to reason that a tense classroom climate can undermine learning and demotivate the learners (MacIntyre, 1999 and Young, 1999). On the other hand, learner motivation will reach its peak in a safe classroom climate in

which students can express their opinions and feel that they do not run the risk of being ridiculed. Alison (1993) agrees that fellow students' behaviors such as being approval or disapproval, showing impatience, or mocking one another are not beyond the teacher's control; they are most often manifested in a competitive classroom. If the teacher eliminates or minimizes competition for the sake of collaboration, there will be fewer opportunities for these behaviors. All the sneers, giggles, and snide remarks by the show-off are out of place if the teacher makes it clear that the students are expected to work together toward a common goal. Making students feel anonymous can bring them the feeling of isolation and elevate their anxious state. Price (1991) advises that teachers should use the students' names when eliciting and asking questions. Every student in the classroom has a family, hobbies, likes, and dislikes, and it is the task of the teacher to tactfully enquire about those areas of the student's life and to get other students interested in them. Feeling isolated may also mean feeling disregarded. Stern (quoted in Nunan, 1989, p.21) finds that teachers tend to have their favorite students and observes that teacher favoritism can be identified in classrooms mainly by inconsistent error correction and unfair distribution of turns. The best liked students have more opportunities to speak and their errors are often disregarded. Argyle (1969) believes that the arrangement of desks can also create or contribute to the passive manner inside the classroom. If students do not face one another, or if someone has a place that does not allow eye contact with the teacher and fellow students, feelings of not belonging will grow. In PPU, the students sit at desks facing the board and the teacher; there is almost no student interaction. If the teacher asks the students to address their friends, they are limited to working only with the students sitting nearby; in some cases they can speak to one another but they cannot turn around to look at the person they are conversing with. Any production of the target language by the students is in choral reading or in closely controlled teacher-student interaction (Yum, 1988). Thus, the perceptual channels are strongly visual (text and blackboard), with most auditory input closely tied to the written. The failure to manage classroom discourse is also one of the main reasons for which students sometimes feel they are being deprived of control, as observed by Chambers(1999), "When turn stealing replaces turn taking such feelings can occur" (p.56) . If a student is always late to answer a general solicit and personal solicits directed

to her are frequently appropriated by others, the student will feel that she lacks control over her role in the classroom interaction. Similar feelings may occur if group members are not willing to listen to one another, openly show lack of interest, or interrupt the speaker. Daniels (1994) also defines that the teacher's explanations, if unclear or unsatisfactory, may lead to comparable frustration, and the learners feel they have no control over the language as a system. Furthermore, the feeling of loss of control may be caused by a domineering, controlling teacher, who leaves the students feeling that they have no influence over what is going on in the classroom. It, therefore, contributes to the students' nervous feeling not being able to produce the target language confidently and naturally. Macintyre (1999, p.215) emphasizes that students need both ample opportunities to learn and steady encouragement and support of their learning efforts to motivate their learning. Such motivation is unlikely to develop in a chaotic classroom, so it is necessary that the teacher should organize and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment. Furthermore, it is only possible for the anxious or alienated students to develop motivation to learn when their learning can occur within a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. All of the problems mentioned can be a major hindrance in the language learning process and, therefore, an action research at UNETI for a period of eight weeks, from the 10th of June to the 12th of August, was taken with an attempt to investigate these problems and with the hope to eliminate or at least decrease the students' anxiety and stress so that they would have more pleasant and effective lessons. The study began with a brief introduction of the problems of stress and anxiety in the language classroom, and then the literature review of the innovation, followed by the description of the innovation implementation. The findings and analysis were discussed toward the end of the paper with an aim to achieve maximum results in the innovation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will present the description of some problems of anxiety and stress in the language classroom, and then some general features of the innovation will be mentioned, followed by the culture context and the class culture of the innovation.

Anxiety and stress in the language classroom

Anxiety is defined as a state of uneasiness and apprehension or fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening. Language anxiety has been said by many researchers to influence language learning. Whereas facilitating anxiety produces positive effects on learners' performance, too much anxiety may cause a poor performance (Scovel, 1991). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991) have found that anxiety typically centers on listening and speaking. Speaking in class is most frequently difficult for anxious students even though they are pretty good at responding to a drill or giving prepared speeches. Anxious students may also have difficulties in discriminating sounds and structures or in catching their meaning. In agreement with Horwitz (1991), Dornyei (1990) states that over-studying sometimes makes students so anxious and tense as to cause errors in speaking or on tests. Additionally, Krashen (1982) comes to the conclusion that anxiety contributes to an affective filter, which prevents students from receiving input, and then language acquisition fails to progress. Price (1991) investigated by asking the questions about what made the students most anxious in a foreign language class. All of the subjects answered that having to speak a foreign language in front of other students resulted in the most anxiety. Other responses were making pronunciation errors or being laughed at by others. Larsen and Freeman (2000) also mention the role of the instructor. They point that those instructors who always

criticize the students' pronunciation might make their students anxious and suggest that they could reduce the students' anxiety by encouraging them to make mistakes in the class and that the instructors should make it clear that the classroom is a place for learning and communication. There is also a high level of stress in the classroom because students have to face unfamiliar or unknown grammatical structures, words, texts and so forth. Therefore, students often feel uncomfortable and insecure in class, which inevitably affects their ability to learn. Mulac (1971) believes that

“Stress is a major hindrance in the language learning process. This process by its nature time consuming and stress provoking . . . raises the stress level to a point at which it interferes with the students' attention and efficiency and undermines the motivation.” (p.105)

Harris (2001) emphasizes that proper classroom explanation is needed by the teacher, so the students can well understand what is expected of them. In the ESL classroom this is more apt to create anxiety because the explanations are given in another language that takes even more effort by the students to comprehend than their own language. It is often the case with Vietnamese students that they do not speak in the class until they are called on. This is partly because the students are used to not speaking their opinion in the class but keeping silent. It is assumed that Vietnamese learners of foreign language tend to have anxiety and stress about speaking in front of other learners as well as the anxiety about learning a new language. As a result of the limitation of speaking competence and the influence by Confucianism, according to Pham (1999), Vietnamese students are not inclined to express opinions in class; some appear conservative and uncomfortable, and seldom ask questions that they do not understand. In other words, influenced by Confucianism, students tend to value quietness, and be less opinioned (Le, 2000). Commonly, they rarely ask questions even though they do not understand the content that the instructor lectures, and they seldom express their own opinions (Do, 1999).

What is innovation?

Innovation is defined as involving deliberate alteration in which intention is a crucial element (White, 1998, p.114). While Mile (1964, p.13) emphasizes organizational behavior in innovation, Rogers and Schoemaker (1971, p.19) and Rogers (1983, p.11) highlight the personal perception and interpretation of innovation. Drawing from these different ideas, Nicholls (1983, p.4) confirms innovation as an idea or practice intended to bring about improvement in relation to deliberately desired objectives. Although innovation can lead to an increase in teachers' workload (White, 1998), it can also be an intentional try to discover if a new idea works well in a certain cultural context and what better approaches to the problem can be used.

Culture context

UNETI is a university in Hanoi which was founded nearly 40 years ago. UNETI aims at training its students to be experts working in such fields as industry, finance, IT... students in UNETI are also required to get the level of A2 certificate 6-level CEFR in order to get their proficiency certification (an English qualification created by the Ministry of Education and Training-MOET required for their future employment). With that demand, English is considered one of the important subjects the students have to master to obtain the qualification. The students carry out three years of study with three terms each to finish their training, during which English consists of 75 periods each term. In UNETI, the Chair of the English Department is responsible for designing the syllabus to be used during the school year. Based on the time allocation by the Rector at the beginning of

the school year, she will decide what textbook suitable for each subject, and how much time for it. As a public university, however, the curriculum must be often changed to meet the need of the labor market and therefore some changes can be made about it during the year. In the end of each term, a group meeting is held during which suggestions of changes are discussed and then submitted to the authority. If they show to fit in the teaching program, some adjustments for the next term are then put into practice accordingly. Such process considered as a bottom-up innovation takes place regularly and thus plays an essential role in pushing UNETI to be one of the private universities in Ha noi City having the high rate of students (eighty to ninety percent) getting good jobs right after graduation. Most of the teachers in UNETI work on long-term contracts, which cannot be renewed at the beginning of every semester. The teachers work full time in UNEI as they have permanent jobs in this place. Teaching in this school, having many social interactions and exchanging teaching experiences with other colleagues inside and outside UNETI quite often help them teach English better with constantly-improved methods of teaching. Although they teach different classes at different time, the break-time between two classes (taken every two periods in about 20 minutes) gives them good opportunities to meet in the staff room and exchange ideas about teaching with each other. New ideas are then discussed with the team leader through e-mail to put in the calendar of the quarterly meeting if considered helpful.

This enhances the social relations in the transmission and adoption of the innovation. The teachers in UNETI are provided with job descriptions "which effectively lay down the requirements of the role" (White, 1998, p.137), so they have the freedom to supplement any materials where necessary based on a given frame and core books. They can have very flexible curriculum and teach the students in such a way that they think to be the best for their students as long as their job requirements are fulfilled. For instance, the order of the lessons can be reversed in accordance with the input exposed to the students at specific time. The students in UNETI work very hard for they have a strong motivation of getting a good job after the training course. Finding out about the students' need which is an interactive negotiation between teachers and students (Nunan, 1995, p.123) is considered a regular activity in UNETI. New ideas of the students are very much encouraged and they are free to critically express their opinions and desires of the learning process in the feedback paper given to them at the end of each term. The UNETI administrators are aware of the importance of innovation which is an open-ended process and far from perfect (Brown, 1994, p.78) since it can bring positive effect to the success of the training process. That is why the students' suggestions for changes are always put in as one of the main parts of the quarterly meeting and discussed seriously for their best solutions.

Class culture

Traditionally, the teaching of English in the language classrooms in Vietnam is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method and an emphasis on rote memory (Alptekin, 2002, p.63). These traditional language teaching approaches have resulted in a typical learning style in which the students see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by the learners. They, therefore, find it normal to engage in modes of learning which are teacher-centered and in which they receive knowledge rather than interpret it. This also leads to a closure-oriented style for most Vietnamese students. These closure-oriented students dislike ambiguity, uncertainty or fuzziness. To avoid these, they will sometimes jump to hasty conclusions about grammar rules or reading themes. Many of them,

according Lewis and Cook (2002), are less autonomous, more dependent on authority figures and more obedient and conforming to rules and deadlines. Phuoc (1975) finally illustrates this tradition with his idea that the teaching and learning style in Vietnam stems from the Confucian model which is closed, suspicious of creativity, and predicated on an unquestioning obedience from the students (p.107).

Innovation Implementation

In this section, the action research will be described, including the innovation methodology, participants and the project procedure.

Innovation methodology

The model of innovation & the type of social change

This innovation project carried out by the researcher herself in response to the need for change in her language classrooms could be described as a bottomed-up process. The change is considered self-motivated or *immanent change* as the researcher has proposed solutions to a perceived problem of the same social system and she can act as an internal change agent and promote ownership (Nicholls 1983; Rudduck 1991; Stenhouse 1975). The research was developed basically on both the social interaction model and the problem solving model suggested by Markee (1997, pp.61-68) without any support from outside change-agents. In the innovation process, the researcher played the role of an adopter, implementer, and also change agent while the students took part in as the clients.

The social interaction model

The social interaction model, according to Havelock (1973, p.42), means the flow of knowledge from research to practice takes place via social networks, rather than through the series of logical steps, and he also emphasizes that the social interaction is not merely a matter of passively receiving from others; it is also a matter of give-and-take, of mutual influence and two-way communications. In agreement with this, Fullan (1982, p.85) affirms the reciprocal nature of dissemination and the non-passive role of clients or users as the features which would-be language curriculum innovators are unwise to ignore. In this study, the researcher identified some solutions for the problems of anxiety and stress in the language classroom through the discussions with her colleagues and then made a decision of innovation by herself. This highlights the influence of social interaction and the importance of social relations in the transmission and adoption of innovation with communication and the communicators as the key factors and also the significant role of the change agent (Markee, 1997, p.50).

The problem solving model

Markee (1997, p.67) asserts that the problem-solving model is theoretically the most popular approach to promote in education, in which teachers themselves act as the inside change agents. By characteristic, this model normally comes along with the bottom-up process of innovations, as observed by White, R.V (1988), "*If an innovation is indigenous to an institution, the process will tend to be from the bottom-up whereas an innovation introduced from outside may follow a top-down process.*" (p.118). In this innovation process, it was the researcher who discussed the problems of her classes with the colleagues and then articulated these problems and carried out an action research to solve the problems by herself, acting as the inside change agent with the participation of the students as the clients. The participants acted independently during the whole process without the support from any outside agents or any directive

resources, which was considered as a bottom-up process. In the problem solving process, according to Havelock (1973), after identifying possible solutions, a process of adaptation, trial and evaluation follows, during which users assess whether the solutions they have devised really solve their problems. If the solutions are deficient or unsatisfactory, the process begins again until the users find the solutions that work (p.87). The social interaction model and the problem-solving model were chosen as they were suitable for the specific culture of the researcher's school and they could help to facilitate changes in this innovation process until its success and as Richards and Rogers (2001) say "second and foreign language teaching and learning is a field that is constantly in a state of change." (p.1)

Participants

The action research was carried out with 50 students in two afternoon Business Classes of pre-intermediate level. The students were in their first year at UNETI, and had the mean age from 19 to 20. The percentage of males and females in these classes was 70 and 30 percent respectively. The classes focused on practicing four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and especially Speaking) and the students took three two-hour sessions per week. The textbooks in use in these classes were Business Basics by David Grant and Robert McCarty, accompanied with workbook and CDs.

Project procedure

The research lasted for a period of eight weeks, from the 10th of June to the 12th of August, and underwent three main stages: firstly, the problem diagnosis was identified, and some possible solutions were then developed to improve the situations, secondly a process of adaptation and trial was conducted, and followed by the findings and discussion in the end.

Problem diagnosis (two weeks)

To clarify the problem, the researcher first observed her students' feelings and reactions during the lessons by keeping class observation diaries for two weeks. A questionnaire was then performed to explore the students' feelings and reactions in the language classroom; their opinions about feedback, responses, and the manner of correcting errors of the language teacher were also surveyed, and finally some students were interviewed individually to clarify the answers given on the questionnaire so as to identify the students' problems for the subsequent actions.

The class observation diaries (the first week)

In the researcher's classes in UNETI, most of the students seem to be hard-working, highly motivated in their study, and their English is basically good. During the researcher's lessons, they appear to concentrate hard. However, from the preliminary observations in the first week, the researcher found that whenever she entered the classroom, she could see and feel the passive atmosphere at the beginning of class, tension and anxiety on the students' faces, and most of them generally felt uneasy, especially the less able students who got very confused when they were called upon. Furthermore, at the end of each lesson the students often felt exhausted and showed an unwillingness to go on with other subjects.

The questionnaires (the second week)

50 sheets of questionnaires were delivered to the students in the two afternoon Business Classes in the second week, aiming at confirming the researcher's previous observations and investigating the source of the problems. The 6-item questionnaire was developed in the form of selected-response items with both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The group-administered procedure was used, by which the questionnaires were distributed to the participants directly and collected right after they had been filled in. This strategy helped ensure a one hundred percent return rate, and clarify any ambiguities as they emerged.

THE INITIAL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions	Options	Number of respondents	Reasons given
1. How do you feel at the beginning of the class?	Tired	9	<input type="radio"/> Class time starts so early at noon <input type="radio"/> Have full-time schedule
	Sleepy	24	<input type="radio"/> Monotonous voice of teacher <input type="radio"/> Not any amusing activities
	Relaxed	11	<input type="radio"/> Part-time schedule <input type="radio"/> Well-prepared for lessons
	Anxious	6	<input type="radio"/> Not well-prepared for lessons
2. How do you feel during the lessons?	afraid	13	<input type="radio"/> Teacher is too serious. (through facial expressions)
	Tense & nervous	20	<input type="radio"/> Teacher is too serious. <input type="radio"/> Not well-prepared for lessons
	Comfortable	17	<input type="radio"/> Well-prepared for lesson <input type="radio"/> Know teacher's characters <input type="radio"/> Good teaching techniques
3. How do you feel when you are called on to answer the teacher's questions?	Afraid	18	<input type="radio"/> Not expect to be called on because teacher only invites good students to answer
	Confused & nervous	21	<input type="radio"/> Teacher over-expects – always wants correct answers <input type="radio"/> Questions are generally difficult to understand <input type="radio"/> Not confident in speaking ability
	Comfortable	11	<input type="radio"/> Ready for the answer, thus, confident <input type="radio"/> Good suggestions from teacher
4. What do you think about the responses made by the teacher to your answer?	Too critical	9	<input type="radio"/> Teacher never satisfied with students' answers
	unsatisfactory	23	<input type="radio"/> Teacher rarely praises or encourages students
	useful	18	<input type="radio"/> Students realize their mistakes and learn a lot
5. What do you think about the way the teacher corrects your mistakes?	Appropriate	26	<input type="radio"/> Students learn from their mistakes, and this helps them remember their lessons
	Inappropriate	24	<input type="radio"/> Repeated Corrections Many Times To Interrupt Speaking
6. How do you want to be corrected?	Immediately, in front of everyone	18	<input type="radio"/> Can learn the correct answers at once
	later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone	22	<input type="radio"/> Can Speak continuously
	later, in private	10	<input type="radio"/> Avoid losing face

From the questionnaire, the researcher identified three essential problems: firstly, many students (66%) thought that they were very tired and sleepy at the beginning of the lesson because the class time took place at the uncomfortable hours, giving rise to their sluggishness and lack of attention; the teacher's boring voice and the classroom without any funny activities also contributed to the passive atmosphere. Secondly, nearly half of the students (42%) said that the questions given by the teacher were rather difficult to understand, which increased their nervous feeling and 48% of the subjects agreed that the way the teacher helped the learners correct their mistakes could make them feel discouraged, interrupt their speaking and elevate their anxiety. Lastly, 64% of the respondents believed that the teacher seemed never to be satisfied with their answers and rarely encouraged them with her praises, which raised their uncomfortable feeling during the class time. Four students were specifically interviewed in order to clarify what they had meant. They said that when the teacher commented on their answers, "She didn't use any encouraging words" and sometimes was very critical in saying "No, it's wrong. Sit down!", and she sometimes even laughed at their "Silly answers". They, therefore, felt rather discouraged. Following up on the problems gathered, the researcher exchanged them with some of her colleagues during the breaks between the classes, and then with the team leader through e-mail to identify the solutions for them.

Plan of action

With many interesting ideas and experiences obtained from her colleagues, the researcher decided to draw up these goals to address the problems: Firstly, Warm-Ups were used to promote a safe classroom atmosphere. Using games-style warmers, according to Thuy's experiences, one of the researcher's colleagues, was a quick way to help the students learn English more easily and effectively. In his book *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, Krashen (1982, p.72) also strongly recommends that in order to stimulate learners' speaking skills, comprehensible input should be supplied in low-anxiety situations. Reducing anxiety and stimulating self-confidence can create higher motivation, thus lowering the affective filter and improving language competence. Secondly, some changes in the researcher's behavior should be applied to create a friendly atmosphere between the teacher and the students: giving more praise and encouragement to the students, building the positive teacher-student relationships by learning the students' names, greeting the students warmly, and talking to the students before, during and after the class. Lastly, appropriate questions and activities were developed to exploit the texts so that the less able students would have more chances to answer the questions correctly. In order to help the students learn more from their mistakes, the method of correcting errors as a group would be used, which could help the students not to be obsessed with accuracy so that they could speak with more confidence and comfort.

Action-implementation

Having identified the problems and created a plan for tackling them, the researcher divided the action-implementation into three phases matching the three goals.

Phase one: Using warm-ups to create the positive classroom atmosphere (the third through the fourth week)

Before the lessons were started, talking about different topics, such as the weather, what the students had done on the weekend, or telling funny stories was taken from five to ten minutes. Twelve warmer activities namely Missing Headlines, Crazy story, Match and Catch the Riddle, Funny Whistles, Running Dictation, Speed Control,

Question Only Please, Rhymes, Find The Differences, Music Mania, Scavenger Hunt, and Exotic Foods (see appendix3) were frequently used in alternation with these talks at the beginning of the class time during two weeks. Each warmer was considered carefully including in a lesson, and the activity was chosen to be appropriate for the class in terms of language, participation, and the lesson goals. Meanwhile, correcting the mistakes was not carried out during the warmer, and feedback was provided afterward.

Phase two: Creating a friendly classroom atmosphere (for two weeks)

The second thing the researcher did in the following weeks was to change her serious attitude toward the students. When the students' answers were correct or close, she praised them by saying "Excellent", "Great", "Fantastic", "Wonderful", or "Very Good". When their answers were incorrect or not specific, she tried to give them prompts or suggestions so that they could get to the right answers. In order to encourage the students to participate in many activities in the classroom, the researcher tried to learn all the students' names. She prepared an index card for each student with their names and other useful information on the left and their picture on the right. She flipped through these cards every day during the weeks, and tried to use the students' names in and out of the class as much as possible. At the same time, greeting students warmly and individually at the beginning of class was also used. The researcher would give a general greeting to the class and observe her students carefully for subtle differences. Then she would greet two or three of them individually. She greeted them by commenting on what they were wearing, asking a question about what they had done the night before, or similarly. Talking to the students before, during and after the class was also one part of this phase. According to Trang, the researcher's team leader, one good way to help the students to improve their English was to give them a chance to use it during their free time. For this reason, the researcher tried to be the first one to enter the class and the last one to leave (this was not easy, since the students sometimes arrived up to 30 minutes early). As the students arrived, the teacher greeted them by their names and asked questions about their lives. This kind of interaction was repeated during the breaks and after the class.

Findings

By continuing keeping the class observation diaries during the innovation the researcher could identify some positive and negative changes in three phases: As the two first weeks passed, the researcher felt more comfortable when she entered the classroom. She also noticed that most of the students became livelier and even the weakest students joined the warmers. However, the first problem was noticed that during the activities many students, especially the boys, tried to support their team to win the games by shouting loudly, clapping their hands in rhythm or knocking hard on the desk while their competitors were booing and whistling noisily to distract their opponents from the games, which caused too much noise, and thus, interfered with the study of the students next door. The fact that the students were so excited that they used Vietnamese during the activities was considered the second problem during this phase. In the second phase, a friendly and encouraging atmosphere had been created between the teacher and the students. They were eager to answer the questions and looked happy when encouraged by their teacher's good comments and approvals. In addition, the students became more attentive to the lessons as the teacher could remember their names and called them exactly in the classroom. Another positive sign was that some weak students came to the teacher during the break and talked to her about their difficulties in studying, and they wanted to learn better, which meant that the learners had

higher motivation in their language learning during this phase. Talking to the students in English before, during and after the class also helped the students answer the questions more confidently as they were led to think and talk in English naturally. When they answered the teacher's questions, they used English for authentic communicative purposes. In the last phase, the researcher noticed that more of the less able students got involved in every activity, especially in pair work or group work. They also felt more confident answering her questions during the lesson. There were, however, some students still showed their timidity and fear when they were called to respond the questions.

Discussion

After carrying out the eight-week plan of action, the researcher delivered the second questionnaire to the 50 students of the two afternoon Business Classes in order to seek for the information about their feelings through the innovation and then draw some innovation implications concerned with the Vietnamese culture. A few of the original questions were changed a bit to focus on her research intentions.

Some innovation implications

The Innovation Fits The Unavoidance Culture: According to the follow-up questionnaire, the fact that 48% of the students agreed that they wanted their mistakes to be corrected immediately since they were eager to know the exact answers shows the culture of the Vietnamese students, that is, they expect clear cut answers and do not tolerate uncertainty.

This indicates the uncertainty avoidance culture which, according to Brown (1994), "defines the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situation which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truth." (p.90) *Collectivist Culture:* As shown in the follow-up questionnaire, 48% of the respondents did not like to have their mistakes corrected in front of the class because they got scared of losing face. Being afraid of losing face is one of the characteristics of the Vietnamese Society, which is referred to by Hofstede (1991, p.312) as *collectivism*. According to Hofstede, collectivist cultures assume that neither the teacher nor any students should ever be made to lose face. Nguen (1986, p.3) also suggests that the students might reserve their own opinion to save the face of the teacher, even when they are aware that the teacher is wrong. That is the concept of 'face-saving' in which Vietnamese traditionally do not reveal any of their problems to outsiders since such revelation is viewed as a sign of weakness. Although Jones (1995) observes that the culture of traditional Vietnamese education insists on quiet and subservient students, in another article, he points out that these students are willing to take part in discussions within groups (Jones, 1995, cited in Littlewood, 1999), which shows one of the aspects of the collectivist culture. From his experience, pair and group work creates enough confidence for even weak students to join in the class discussions. Another indicator of the collectivist feature is that the majority of the learners do not feel comfortable if they need to use their "I" identity (An, 2002). In her article *Cultural Effects on Learning and Teaching English in Vietnam*, An (2002, p.28) points out that Vietnamese learners often complain that their anxiety and stress hinder their learning process, and many Vietnamese students when interviewed show that they do

The follow-up student questionnaire

Questions	Options	Number of respondents	Reasons given
(1) How do you feel at the beginning of the class?	Afraid	1	o Not well-prepared for the lesson
	Tense& nervous	5	o Not self-confident enough
	Comfortable	13(female)	o The atmosphere of the class is friendly
	Very relaxed	31(male)	o Enjoy the warmer activities, especially competitive ones
(2) What do you think about the teacher's behavior toward the students during the class time?	Very strict	0	
	Strict	7	o Not receive enough praise from the teacher as expected
	Open & friendly	43	o Caring and warming tone o Have encouraging manner by memorizing the students' names and get friendly talks individually
(3) How do you feel when you are called on to answer the teacher's questions?	Afraid	0	
	Confused	6	o Not well-prepared for the lesson o Not self-confident enough
	Normal	10	o Teacher is more open and encouraging o More involved in the lesson, thus, more confident
	Highly motivated	21	o Lesson is so interesting o Receive praise from teacher when answering correctly
(4) What do you think about the questions to exploit the text?	Very difficult	0	
	Difficult	5	o Not well-prepared for the lesson
	Appropriate	14	o Teacher gives many appropriate questions
	Much easier to understand	31	o Many helpful suggestions to help answer the questions quickly
(5) What do you think about the general comments the teacher makes to your answers?	Too critical	0	
	Not encouraging enough	9	o Sometimes the teacher is still a bit critical
	Encouraging	41	o Teacher changed her behavior to make students feel more confident and encouraged
(6) What do you think about the way the teacher corrects the mistakes?	Inappropriate	24	o Lose face when serious mistakes are corrected in front of the class o Want to know the correct answers at once
	Appropriate	10	o Learn more from the mistakes
	Encouraging	16	o Assist each other in correcting errors in group o Practice English with enjoyment and success o Not reluctant to speak

want to avoid making themselves conspicuous and before speaking up, individual students want to make sure they have the sanction of their peers. The innovation was carried out with the changes in the teaching method, in which the student-student interaction got increased by conducting more pair work and group work activities. As a result, 32% of the students felt encouraged and spoke English better when working in group and when their mistakes were corrected in group, too. This conforms with the concept of *collectivism* in the findings of Hofstede (1991, p.315), "*Individuals will only speak up in small groups*". Working in groups to achieve the goals gives the Vietnamese learners a supportive relationship while striving for the target language competence. *Power Distance*: Vietnamese culture, according to Ellis (1994, p.151), affected by Confucianist tradition for which the teacher gets the authority of power in the classroom, indicates a large power distance. *Power distance*, as Hofstede (1986, p.83) uncovers, *is the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally*. More importantly, Hofstede finds that power distance variability influences the nature of the teacher and the student relationship. In the initial questionnaire, 36% of the students thought that the teacher only invited the more able students to answer the questions and that was the reason why they were not expected to be called on for the answers, which shows the characteristic of power distance "*The less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal*" (Hofstede, 1986, p.112). The innovation, however, appears to be successful with 62% of the respondents in the follow-up questionnaire confirming that they felt motivated to speak English in the class when the teacher changed her behavior and tried to give the less able students more chances to use the language in the classroom. *Masculine Culture*: The innovation was carried out with 70% male and 30% female students in total, which means that the class culture was expected to be more masculine than feminine. In the follow-up questionnaire 62% male students agreed that the warmer activities full of competition made them feel very relaxed; in other words, they were given the chances to compete against each other noisily and enjoyed their success very much. This shows the characteristic of masculinity, as Hofstede (1986) puts it "*men are expected to be assertive, ambitious and competitive to strive for material success.*" (p.111) *Diffusion Of The Innovation*: It is expected that the researcher will share her experiences with other teachers and such innovations can be spread out as described by Markee (1997)

"An innovation may also spread from network1 to network2 because individuals D and E know each other, either through bonds of friendship or because they work with each other or are in the same field. Thus, once E is in possession of whatever information D has about an innovation, E can diffuse this information to F, G, and I in network2." (p.62)

CONCLUSION

This action research was an effort to solve the problems of anxious and stressful climate in the language classroom in order to maintain a friendly, relaxing, and harmonious classroom atmosphere, which could bolster the students' feelings of well-being, understanding, and confidence in the classroom activities and, therefore, encourage all the students to do their best. From the innovation, the researcher found that nearly most of the students in her English classes enjoyed and involved themselves in the newly-applied activities. As a result, the atmosphere at the beginning of the class was positive and cheerful. After participating in warmers' group and pair work activities with the positive approval and praise for their efforts from the teacher, the students were enthusiastic and ready during the rest of the lesson. Particularly when used with the afternoon lessons, such

activities helped keep the students awake and in a good mood for studying. Although the students made a lot of noise and sometimes got so excited that they used Vietnamese during these activities, the researcher still felt these activities much helpful: The students got more highly-motivated; the less able students participated more in the lessons with confidence and comfort, and the teacher was able to take advantage of the warm, active classroom atmosphere in many ways. Teaching, therefore, became more fruitful and relaxing. Teaching is a continuously creative and a problem-solving art of craft and the effort of constant improvement is an essential part of the teaching profession (Perren, 1999). With this study the researcher hopes that she can share the classroom experiences with other teachers so that they can apply them successfully in their own specific teaching situations, creating a relaxed learning environment in which the students can practice English with enjoyment and success.

CITED REFERENCES

- Alison, J. (1993). Not bothered? Motivating reluctant language learners in key stage 4: London: CILT.
- Alptekin, C. (2002). Towards intercultural communicative competence in ELT. *ELT Journal* 56 (1): 57-64.
- An, H. (2002). Cultural effects on learning and teaching English in Vietnam. *ELT Journal* 52 (1):28-32.
- Argyle, M. (1969). *Social interaction*. London: Tavistock Press.
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Chambers, G. N. (1999). *Motivating language learners*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Daniels, R. (1994). Motivational mediators of cooperative learning. *Psychological reports*, 74: 1011-22.
- Do, T. (1999, October). Foreign language education policy in Vietnam: The emergence of English and its impact on higher education. Paper presented at the fourth international conference on language and development, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Dornyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign-language learning. *Language learning* 40, pp. 45-78.
- Ellis, GD. (1994). The appropriateness of the communicative approach in Vietnam: An interview study in intercultural communication. Melbourne unpublished master's thesis faculty of education Latrobe University.
- Harris, K. (2001). "Some ideas for motivating students." *Virtual salt*. Prentice Hall.
- Havelock, R.G. (1973). *The change agent's guide to innovation in education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Educational Technology Publications.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. London: McGraw Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural differences in teaching and learning. *International journal of intercultural relation*. Vol. 10.
- Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holliday, A. (1997). Six lessons: Cultural continuity in communicative language teaching. *Language teaching research* 1: 212-38.
- Horwitz, E. K., M. B. Horwitz and J. A. Cope (1991). "Foreign language classroom anxiety" in E. K. Horwitz and D. J. Young, language anxiety, 27-39. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Jones, J. (1995). *A cross cultural perspective on the pragmatics of small group discussion*. Singapore: RELC.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamum.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

- Le, V. C. (2000). Language and Vietnamese pedagogical contexts. In J. Shaw, D. Lubeska, and M. Noullet, eds. language and development: Partnership and interaction: Proceedings of the fourth international conference on language and development, Hanoi, Vietnam, 73–79. Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.
- Lewis, M & McCook, F (2002). Culture of teaching: voices from Vietnam. *ELT Journal* 56(2) 146-153.
- Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied linguistics*, 20(1), 71-94. Hong Kong: OUP.
- Littlewood, W. (2000). Do Asian students really want to listen and obey? *ELT Journal* 54 (1): 31–36.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1999). Language anxiety: A review of the research for language Teachers. In Young, D. J. (ed.). *Affect in foreign language and second language learning*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, pp. 24-45.
- Markee, N.P.P. (1997). *Managing curricular innovation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mile, M.P.(1964). *Educational innovation. The nature of problem*. Newyork: Teacher College Press. 1-48.
- Mulac (1971). *Educational games for fun*,(pp.106-108). New York: Prentice Hall
- Nguyen TH (1986). *Towards a professional development for teachers of English in Vietnamese high schools'* unpublished MA (TESOL). Field study report faculty of Education University of Canberra.
- Nicholls, J. (1993). Exchange structure in the ESL classroom: Q-A-C and Q-CQ-A-C sequences in small group interaction. *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, pragmatics and language learning monograph series*, 4:183-193.
- Nunan, D. (1995). Closing the gap between learning and instruction. *TESOL Quarterly* 29 (1): 133–58.
- Perren, J. (1999). Lifelong learning, reflective practice, and teacher development. Paper presented at the international conference on language and development, Hanoi, October.
- Pham, H. (1999, October). The key socio-cultural factors that work against success in tertiary English language training programs in Vietnam. Paper presented at the fourth international conference on language and development, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Phuoc, T. (1975). The nature of teaching and learning style in Vietnam. *EA journal* volume 12 No2: 101-112.
- Price, M. L. (1991). "The Subjective experience of foreign language anxiety: Interviews with highly anxious students" in E. K. Horwitz and D. J. Young, *language anxiety*, 101-108. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Richards, J. C., and T. Rogers. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rinvolucris, M. (1984). *Grammar games: cognitive, affective, and drama activation for EFL students*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Rogers, E.M. and F. Shoemaker (1971). *Communication of innovations: A cross-cultural approach*. New York: MacMilan and Free Press.
- Rogers, E.M. (1983). *The diffusion of innovation*. London and New York: Free Press.
- Rudduck, J. (1991). *Innovation and change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Scovel, T. (1991). "The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research" in E. K. Horwitz and D. J. Young, *language anxiety*, 101-108. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Stern, H.H. (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sternhouse, L. (1975). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London: Heinemann.
- White, R.V. (1998). *The ELT curriculum: Design, innovation and management*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Young, D. J. (ed.). (1999). *Affect in foreign language and second language learning*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Yum, J. (1988). The impact of Confucianism on interpersonal relationships and communicative patterns in East Asia. *Communication monographs*, 55, pp. 374–388.

REFERENCES

- Babcock, S. P. (1993). The significance of cultural influences within the ESL/EFL classroom: A Taiwan experience. ERIC document reproduction service no. ED 375-681.
- Bantjes, Leon. (1994). "Motivation in the Classroom." engines for education. The institute for the learning sciences, northwestern university.
- Bax, S. (2003). The end of CLT: A context approach to language teaching. *ELT journal* 57 (3):278–86.
- Beasley, B. and L. Riordan. (1981). The classroom teacher as researcher. *English in Australia*, 55.
- Berns, M. S. (1990). *Contexts of competence: Social and cultural considerations in communicative language teaching*. New York: Plenum.
- Borg, W.R. et al. (1970). *The mini course: A micro teaching approach to teacher education*. California: Collier-Macmillan.
- Boud, D. (ed.). (1988). *Developing student autonomy in learning*. New York: Kogan Press.
- Breen, M., and C. Candlin. (1980). The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. *Applied linguistics* 1 (2): 89–112.
- Brenner, P. (1993). Jack Richards presenting on: Action research at the third international English teacher's association of Israel conference, the Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, July 11-14, (1993). *Newsletter WAESOL (The Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages)*, 4, pp. 9-10.
- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual matters.
- Byrne, D. (1980). *English teaching perspectives*. Essex: Longman Group.
- Byrne, Donn, (1988). *Teaching oral English*, new ed. Longman Group Limited.
- Byrne, Donn, (1989). *Techniques for classroom interaction*. Longman Group UK Limited.
- Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. Richards and R. Schmidt, eds. *language and communication*, 2–27. London: Longman.
- Canale, M., and M. Swain. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied linguistics* 1(1): 1–47.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1980). Integrating group work with the teaching of grammar. *English Teaching Forum*, 18, 3, pp. 23.
- Chan, V. (2001). Readiness for learner autonomy: what do our students tell us? *Teaching in higher education* 6 (4): 505–18.
- Cortazzi, M., and L. Jin. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In culture in second language teaching and learning, ed. E. Hinkel, 196–219. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crookes, G. & Schmidt, R. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language learning*. 41: 469-512.
- Dat, B. (2003). Localising ELT materials in Vietnam: A case study. In *methodology and materials design in language teaching: Current perceptions and practices and their implications*, ed. W. A.
- Davies, N. F. (1980). Oral fluency training and small groups. *English Teaching Forum*, 18, 3, pp. 36-39.

- Doff, A. (1988). *Teach English*. Glasgow: Cambridge University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (1998). *Motivation in second and foreign language learning*. CILT: CUP.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Duong, T. (2000). *Suy nghi ve van hoa giao duc Vietnam*. HCMC: Tre Publisher.
- Ehrman, M. E. and Dornyei, Z. (1998). *Interpersonal dynamics in second language education: The visible and invisible classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, G. (1995). *Teaching and learning styles in Vietnam: Lessons for Australian educators*. *Journal of Vietnamese studies*, 8, 9-16.
- Ellis, Gail, and Barbara Sinclair, (1994). *Learning to learn English: A course in learner training*. Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, D.L (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Fullan, M. (1982). *Research into educational innovation*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Gall, M. D. (1970). *The use of questions in teaching*. *Review of educational research*, 40, p 707-721.
- Gardner, R. C. and MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). *A student's contributions to second-language learning. Part II: Affective variables*. *Language teaching* 26, 1-11.
- Gerard Counihan. (1998). *Teach students to interact, not just talk, the internet TESL journal*, vol. IV
- Gilliland, H., Mauritsen, H. (1971). *Humor in the classroom*. *The reading teacher*, 24, 753-756.
- Gower, R. and S. Walters. (1983). *Teaching practice handbook*. Oxford: Heinemann International.
- Graham, S. (1997). *Effective language learning*. Great Britain: WBC.
- Hadfield, Jill. (1992). *Classroom dynamics*. Oxford University Press.
- Hadley, G. (1997). *Encouraging oral communication in the EFL classroom*. Paper presented at the Niigata university general education and language research group. Niigata city, Japan.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The practice of English language teaching*. Longman Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2003). *Popular culture, methods, and context*. *ELT journal* 57 (3): 287-94.
- Harmer, J. (1998). *How to teach English*. Addison Wesley Longman Limited.
- Hird, B. (1995). *How communicative language can be teaching in China?* *Prospect* 10 (3): 21-17.
- Holmes, J. L. and Ramos, R. (1991). *Talking about learning: Establishing a framework for discussing and changing learning processes*. In James, C. and Garrett, P. (eds.). *Language awareness in the classroom*. 1991: 198-212).
- Hui, L. (1997). *New bottle, old wine: Communicative language teaching in china*. *English Teaching Forum* 35 (4): 38-41.
- Hymes, D. (1972). *On communicative competence*. In J. B. Pride, and J. Holmes. eds. *sociolinguistics*, 269-93. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Jianping, Y. (1999). "Improving the environment of the English classroom". *ELI teaching* 31, pp.24-26
- Kerr, L. (1985). *Pair work & some practical hints*. *English Teaching Forum*, 23, 4, pp. 22 24.
- Kerry, T. (1982). *Effective questioning: A teaching skills workbook*. London: Macmillan Education Limited.
- King, M. (2001). *Personal communication*, January 6.
- Kohonen, V. (1992). *Experiential language learning: second language learning as cooperative learner education*. In Nunan, D. (Ed.), *collaborative language learning and teaching*, pp. 14-39.
- Kramsch.C. (2000). *Language and culture*. Oxford: OUP.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. and Long, M. H. (1991). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London: Longman.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999, October). *On the appropriateness of language teaching methods in language and development*. Paper presented at the fourth international conference on language and development, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Le, C. (1999, October). *Language and Vietnamese pedagogical contexts*. Paper presented at the fourth international conference on language and development, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Le, V. (1997). *Day va hoc ngoai ngu-Nhung nghich ly. Giao Duc va thoi dai chu nhat (teaching and learning foreign languages-the paradoxes)*. *The education and Time Newspaper*, Sunday edition. 5th November, p. 6.
- Li, W. (1998). "Ever tried to greet your students individually?" *ELI teaching* 29, p.42.
- Liao, X. (2004). *The need for communicative language teaching in China*. *ELT journal* (58) 3:270-73.
- Lier, van L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum. awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. USA: Longman.
- Liu, N. F. & Littlewood, W. (1997). *Why do many students appear reluctant to participate in classroom learning discourse?* *System*, 25/3, 371-384.
- Long, M. and P. Porter (1985). *Group work, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition*. *TESOL quarterly*, 19, 2, pp. 207 28.
- Loomax, R. G., Moosavi, S. A. (1998). *Using humor to teach statistics; Must they be orthogonal?*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American educational research association, San Diego, April 17th, 1998.
- Lumsden, Linda S. "Student motivation to Learn." *ERIC Digest* number 92.
- Malaham-Thomas, Ann, (1987). *Classroom interaction*. Oxford University Press.
- Marshall, L., and F. Rowland. (1998). *A guide to learning independently*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman.
- Nanda, V. K. (1998). *Modern techniques of teaching*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt Ltd.
- Nation, P. (1989). *Group work and language learning*. *English Teaching Forum*, 27, 2, pp. 20 24.
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olsen, R. and S. Kagan. (1992). *About cooperative learning*. In *cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book*. Ed. C. Kessler. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Omaggio, A. (1978). 'Successful language learners: What do we know about them?' *ERIC / CLL News Bulletin*, May, 23.
- Omaggio-Hadley,A. (1993). *Teaching language in context*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Omalley, J. M. and Chamot, A. V. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. London: Macmillan.
- Orlich, D.C., Harder, R. J., Callahan, R.C., Kauchak, D. P., & Gibson, H. W. (1994). *Teaching strategies: A guide to better instruction*. (4th ed). Toronto: Heath and Company.
- Paran, A. (2003). *Helping learners to become critical: How coursebooks can help*. In *methodology and materials design in language teaching: Current perceptions and practices and their implications*, ed. W. A. Renandya, 109-23. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Pennycook, A. (1989). *The concept of method, interested knowledge, and the politics of language teaching*. *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Pham, H. (2001). *A second look at the question of the ownership of English*. *Teacher's Edition* 7 (November): 4-10.
- Pham, K. (2001, July 10). *Co hoi tim viec*. *Tuoi Tre (Ho Chi Minh City newspaper)*: 10/7/2001, 15. Ho Chi Minh City.
- Preston, D. R. (1989). *Sociolinguistics and second language acquisition*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Provine, R. Ph.d (2000). The science of laughter. *Psychology today*, November/December 2002, 33 , (6), 58-62.
- Rathbone, C. H. (1971). *Open education: The informal classroom*. New York: Citation Press.
- Reid, J. M. (1987). The learning style preferences of ESL students. *TESOL quarterly*, 21, pp. 87-111.
- Rhem, J. (1998). Humor in the classroom. *The national teaching & learning forum (online)*, vol. 7, no. 6.
- Richard-Amato, P (1996). *Making it happen, interaction in the second language classroom*. New York: Longman,.
- Rinvoluceri, M. (1998). *Dictation: New methods, new possibilities*. Cambridge University Press,
- Robb, Laura (1994). "Whole language, whole learners." William Morrow and Co.
- Rubin, Joan, and Irene Thompson ,(1982). *How to be a more successful language learner*. Heinle and Heinle Publishers, Inc.
- Sato, K., and R. Kleinsasser. (1999). Communicative language teaching (CLT): Practical understandings. *The Modern language journal* 83 (4): 494–517.
- Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *Communicative curriculum design for the 21st century*. *English Teaching Forum* 40 (1): 2–7.
- Shiple, C. M., Camm, M. M., Hilderbrand, J., Mitchell, G. T. (1964). *A synthesis of teaching methods*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: OUP.
- Spratt, M. (1994). *English for the teacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spratt, M., G. Humphreys, and V. Chan. (2002). Autonomy and motivation: Which comes first? *language teaching research* 6 (3): 245–66.
- Stevick, E. (1976). Teachers of English as an alien language. In *On TESOL '76*, ed. J. Fanselow and R. H. Crymes, 225–26. Washington, DC: TESOL.
- Sullivan, P. N. (2000). Playfulness as mediation in communicative language teaching in a Vietnamese classroom. In J. P. Lantolf, ed. *sociocultural theory and second language learning*, 115–32. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Talebinezahd, M. R. (2003). Effective questions. *English Teaching Forum* 41 (4): 46–47.
- Tarone, E. and Yule, G. (1989). *Focus on the language learner*. Oxford: OUP.
- Thompson, G. (1996). Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching. *ELT journal* 50 (1): 9–15.
- Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: Progress and resistance. *TESOL quarterly* 35(1): 194–97.
- Towndrow, P. (1999). Logic problems and English language learning. *MET*, 8/1:34-37
- Tran, T. L. (2000). A Vietnamese perspective on world Englishes. *Teacher's edition* 4 (December): 26–32.
- Tremblay, P. F., R. C. Gardner. (1995). Expanding the motivation construct in language learning. *Modern language journal*, 79, pp. 505-518.
- Tumposky, N. (1982). 'The learner on his own'. In M. Geddes and G. Sturtridge (eds.). *Individualisation*. London: Modern English Publications, pp. 4-7.
- Underhill, A. (2000). The psychological atmosphere we create in our classrooms. *The Language Teacher Online*.
- Van Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. Longman: New York.
- Vizmuller, J. (1980). Psychological reasons for using humor in a pedagogical setting . *Canadian modern language review*, 36 , (2), 266-71.
- Watson, M.J. Emerson, S. (1988). Facilitate learning with humor. *Journal of nursing education*, 2 , (2), 89-90.
- Willis, J. (1981). *Teaching English through English*. Essex: Longman Group
- Wright, T. (1987). *Roles of teachers & learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yoshida, K. (1996). Intercultural communication as interpersonal communication. In *On JALT 95: Curriculum and evaluation*. Eds. S. Cornwall, H. Morikawa and G. Van Troyer. Tokyo: JALT.
- Young, A., and M. Smith, (1998). " So you're going to teach oral English". *ELI teaching* 29, pp.9-11 and 8.
- Young, D. J. (1992). Language anxiety from the foreign language specialist's perspective: Interviews with Krashen, Omaggio-Hadley, Terrell, and Rardin. *Foreign language annals*, 25, pp. 157-172.

APPENDIX 1

The following pre-research questionnaire was delivered to the learners prior to the innovation in order to confirm the problems identified through the previous class observation diaries.

THE INITIAL STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: ____ Male Female

1. How do you feel at the beginning of the class?

- Tired
- Sleepy
- Anxious
- Relaxed

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

2. How do you feel during the lessons?

- Afraid
- Tense & Nervous
- Comfortable

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

3. How do you feel when you are called on to answer the teacher's questions?

- Afraid
- Confused & Nervous
- Comfortable

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

4. What do you think about the responses made by the teacher to your answer?

- Too critical
- Unsatisfactory
- Useful

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

5. What do you think about the way the teacher corrects your mistakes?

- Appropriate
- Inappropriate

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

6. How do you want to be corrected?

- Immediately, in front of everyone
- Later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone
- Later, in private

Reasons for your opinion:
.....
.....

7. If you have anything else that you want to tell, please write it here

.....
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX 2

This post-research questionnaire aimed at seeking the information about how the clients felt about the newly-applied activities in the innovation and how they would like those to be changed.

THE FOLLOW-UP STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: ____ Male Female

1. How do you feel at the beginning of the class?

- Afraid
- Tense& nervous
- Comfortable
- Very relaxed

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

2. What do you think about the teacher's behavior toward the students during the class time?

- Very strict
- Strict
- Open & friendly

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

3. How do you feel when you are called on to answer the teacher's questions?

- Afraid
- Confused
- Normal
- Highly motivated

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

4. What do you think about the questions to exploit the text?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Appropriate
- Much easier to understand

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

5. What do you think about the general comments the teacher makes to your answers?

- Too critical
- Not encouraging enough
- Encouraging

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

6. What do you think about the way the teacher corrects the mistakes?

- Inappropriate
- Appropriate
- Encouraging

Reasons for your opinion:

.....

.....

.....

7. If you have anything else that you want to tell, please write it here

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX 3

The researcher has used the following twelve examples of Warmers (diffused from Nguyen and Trang, two of her colleagues in LC) in two English classes at College during the innovation.

Rhymes

Times: 3-10 minutes.
 Level: Beginner to low-intermediate.
 Materials: None.
 Aim: To build phonological awareness.
 Instructions: A base word is given and students try to come up with as many rhyming words as possible. Alternatives are to do this in groups, allow nonsense words, or ask for alliteration instead of rhyme.

Question Only, Please.

Times: 3-10 minutes.
 Level: Low-intermediate and above.
 Materials: None
 Aim: To provide practice in who- and yes/no question formation.
 Instructions: Two players must carry on a conversation using questions only. Each player tries to ask a question to which it will be difficult to reply with another question. The first player to answer with a statement loses the game. For example:
 S1: What's your name?
 S2: Do you want to know my name?
 S1: Are you going to tell me?
 S2: What will you do if I don't tell you?
 S1: I will go away.

Speed Control

Time: 3-10 minutes.
 Level: Low-intermediate and above.
 Materials: Short text, pens, and paper.
 Aim: To provide practice in listening and writing.
 Instructions: The teacher works as a "cassette player" and reads a short text at natural speed. Students listen and try to write down the entire text. They can control the teacher's reading by using commands such as "stop", "pause", "play", "past forward", and "rewind". At the end, give out copies of the text so that students can compare what they have written with the original.

Running Dictation

Time: 3-10 minutes.
 Level: Low-intermediate and above.
 Materials: Short text, pens, and paper.
 Aim: To provide practice in listening, reading aloud, and writing.
 Instructions: The teacher tapes a short text to the blackboard. Students sit in pairs, with one student a reader and the other writer. The reader goes to the black board and reads the text, then runs back to his partner and says it aloud to him. The reader is not allowed to use hands or body language or to translate into the mother tongue. The writer can ask his partner to repeat or spell any word he does not catch. A variation on

this is to put different pieces of the text around the classroom. After retrieving all the pieces through the above means, pairs work together to put the text in logical order.

Funny Whistles

Time: 3-5 minutes.

Level: Beginner or low-intermediate.

Materials: None

Aim: To provide practice in listening, speaking, and pronunciation.

Instructions: Write "to" and "two" on the board. Ask students to read these and say if they sound the same or different. Next, write "1:50" and ask students to read this until you elicit "ten to two". Next, write "1:58" and do the same, eliciting "two to two". Add the words "from" and "to", and ask students to read the whole passage as quickly as they can: "From ten to two to two to two". To finish, you might ask, "How many minutes are there from ten to two to two to two?". This is usually good for a little laughter!

Match and Catch the Riddle

Time: 10 minutes.

Level: Any (choose riddles appropriately)

Materials: Riddle questions and answers on slips of paper.

Aim: To improve reading aloud, listening, use of the simple present tense, and linguistic reasoning.

Instructions: Divide the class into a "Question" group and an "Answer" group, and give students in each the appropriate slips of paper. One student from the "Question" group reads her riddle aloud, and whichever student in the "Answer" group believes he has the answer should respond. Once the riddle questions and answers have all been matched, find out which ones students do or do not understand.

Crazy story

Time: 10-15 minutes.

Level: Intermediate or above.

Materials: Story-column sheets (see below).

Aim: To improve reading aloud, writing, listening, and use of the simple past tense.

Instructions: Prepare sheets of paper with six columns, headed: "Who?" (man's name); "Whom?" (woman's name); "Where?"; "What did he say?"; "What did she say?"; and "What did they do?". Divide the class into groups of six students each, and give each group one paper. The first student writes in the first column, then folds the paper to cover what he has written. The second student writes in the second column, and folds the paper again. Continue in this way, with each student seeing only their own column. When finished, ask a representative from each group to read their story aloud to the class, as follows:

_____ met _____ in/at _____

He said, _____

She said, _____

And so they _____

Missing Headlines

Time: 3-10 minutes.

Level: Intermediate or above.

Materials: News headlines and articles.

Aim: To develop reading (especially for specific information) and speaking skills. Instructions: Cut out news items and their headlines, and paste them onto separate sheets of paper. Give either an article or a headline to every student, then ask them to move around the room to find their match. They could do this through reading, speaking, or both.

Find the Differences

Time: 10 minutes.

Level: Any (choose pictures appropriately).

Materials: Pairs of pictures.

Aim: To develop speaking (describing and question-asking) and listening skills.

Instructions: Find or draw two pictures which are the same except for a certain number of features. Students should work in pairs to find the differences between the two. They may not show their pictures to each other, but must do the task orally, describing and asking questions until the differences have been located.

Exotic Foods

Focus: conversation (speaking and listening) and some writing.

Unit: foods, colors, numbers, animals, temperatures, etc.

This two part activity can be done over the course of two classes or incorporated with homework. The theme revolves around foods using the target language. Once the students have been acquainted with the names of foods, then they create a menu (breakfast, lunch or dinner) with options. The menu should include drinks, deserts, creative dishes (octopus with spinach sauce over frozen red rice). In fact, students are encouraged to be as creative as possible using colors, food types, numbers, invented dish names (i.e. sardine lasagna), temperatures, and any other descriptors. The menu should include ridiculous prizes such as \$17 for three burned eggs over sardines served on a blueberry bagel. Once the menus have been created, then students role play using the menus. For example, students can work in pairs, in groups of three where one person is the waiter and the others customers, or before the class in a setting that is likely to be entertaining and instructional. Individual teachers should determine which setting will work best for each class.

Scavenger Hunt

Focus: team work, conversation (speaking and listening), some writing.

Unit: classroom items, descriptive words, spatial (i.e. near the door or next to the table).

This activity generates a lot of enthusiasm and encourages team work in the target language. The teacher selects approximately 25 different items to be used in the scavenger hunt. These items are cleverly placed throughout the classroom (teacher designates off-limit places such as desk drawers or private property) prior to class. The activity begins with a quick explanation of what is expected of the students. Then, the teacher hands each team (two or three students per team is ideal) a list of ten items to seek. However, each team receives a list that is slightly different from the other teams (this explains the need for 25 items).

Initially, the students use dictionaries or other sources to determine what each item on the list. Then the fun really begins as teams seek to locate these items quickly. Located items are collected by the teams and brought to their home base (desks). The final phase involves writing a basic sentence (in the target language) using each item on the list (ten sentences in this case). These sentences should briefly describe the item or perhaps disclose where it was located (i.e. the pencil is yellow or the paper clip was near the blackboard). Again, only the target language is used throughout the activity.

Music Mania

Focus: listening, reading, word association.

Unit: varies depending on song selection.

Here the students work on their listening and reading skills. In some cases, singing is also involved. This activity lasts approximately 10-15 minutes and is quite relaxing to the students. The teacher selects a song tailored to the age and level of the students. Naturally, the song is in the target language. For example, use the song Happy Birthday for little ones or a more contemporary song for older students. The song should contain ideas, words, themes, or concepts currently being studied in class. The activity begins when the song is played twice for the students. After the second time, the words are placed on the overhead and each student receives a copy of the words. Now the students hear the song and follow along by reading the words. In certain classes the students may be encouraged to sing along as well (more typical of younger classes). Finally, the students are asked to underline unfamiliar words. This leads to a discussion involving the use of contextual clues to assign meaning to unfamiliar words. As an option, fairly advanced classes may be asked to identify verbs in tenses currently being studied (conditional, past, future, etc.) or other grammar related topics.