

DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING MARKET LEADER AT THUYLOI UNIVERSITY CONTEXTFROM TEACHERS' POINTS OF VIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational quality is one of the core values of Thuyloi University in general and its English division, in School of International Education, in particular. The lecturers of the English division, Thuyloi University have always been working with a view to achieve excellence in teaching and learning performance. Therefore, in the academic year 2018-2019, the course book “Market Leader” (3rd edition, elementary) was introduced and employed for the first time. This paper is carried out to find out the difficulties in teaching Market Leader at Thuyloi university context; thus helping the teachers be aware of and overcome the challenges to get better results.

2. CONTEXT

Thuyloi University is a multi-disciplinary university with its strength in the fields of water resources management, environment, natural disaster prevention and mitigation. However, in the past few years, some new departments have drawn a large number of students including economics and management department. Also, these students need certain special requirements of graduation including English skill to compete in the labour market. In that context, “Market Leader” (3rd edition, elementary) was chosen to teach English 1 and English 2 to the first year students of economics and management department in the first and second term of the academic year 2018-2019 respectively. The students are

generally in their late teens (18 or 19 years old). The majority of them are female.

3. THE COURSEBOOK

“Market Leader” elementary by David Cotton, David Falvey and Simon Kent (3rd edition), published by Pearson Longman in 2012 is an English coursebook for business students. It is the coursebook at the first level in the series of 5 levels i.e. Elementary – Pre-intermediate – Intermediate – Upper-intermediate – Advanced and is designed to cater to students at A1 – A2 levels of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is aimed at providing students with materials to improve the 4 skills listening, speaking, reading and writing in the business context. The book consists of 12 units with different topics. Each 8-page unit contains 5 different sections namely discussion, texts, language work, skills and case study. The reading materials are authentic ones extracted from Financial Times. Likewise, the listening materials are authentic interviews with people in the business circle (Cotton et al., 2012).

4. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology is employed in this paper combined with survey, interview and data analysis.

5. PARTICIPANTS

10 teachers in the English division who used Market Leader to teach English 1 and English 2 to students of economics department.

6. RESULTS

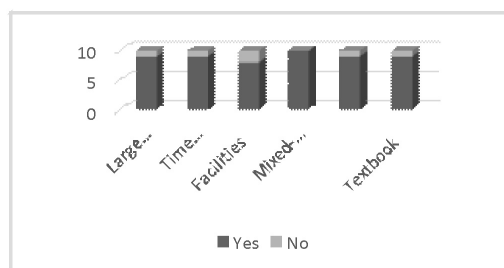


Figure 1. Teachers' opinions towards difficulties in teaching Market Leader

6 challenges the English teachers encounter when teaching Market Leader are clearly illustrated in Figure 1. 100% of the teachers agree that mixed-ability class is a challenge that they have experienced. 9 out of 10 people are in the opinion that large class size, inappropriate time allocation, some students' passive attitudes towards learning English and the textbook entail difficulties for them in teaching. Another obstacle that 80% of the teachers point out is the facilities.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1. Large class size

Let us take a look at some opinions on ideal class size for a language class. In the article "Large Size Classes: The Situation in Japan" (1989), Locastro indicated that the preferable number of students in a class was between 10 and 20 regarding students' opinions, and the ideal number was 19 in instructors' points of view. According to the "Center for educational resources and language learning" of the university of Texas at Austin (available at <https://coerll.utexas.edu/>), "an upper limit that is often suggested as a reasonable compromise is 25 students". However, at Thuyloi university, the average number of students in a class in English 1 is around 45 students (from <http://dangky.tlu.edu.vn/>). In an article "2019 - the time is ripe" from a famous online newspaper Vietnamnet, the Vietnamese Minister of Education Phung

Xuan Nha says "How can we renovate the teaching methodology in large classes?"

Teaching large classes poses obvious challenges to teachers. 6 out of 10 teachers agree that it is a tiring job for classroom management in such big classes. 70% of the teachers say that it takes longer to do class activities in comparison with a normal class. Teachers I says that in a big class, it is hard to give feedback to students' writing. Teachers B and E express the difficulty in checking students' pronunciation individually.

7.2. Time allocation

In fact, there is a contradiction between the time in class for the whole course (120 periods) with the requirement of English level the students have to acquire prior to university graduation (TOEIC 450). In accordance with the webpage <https://www.emse.fr/>, the estimated hours of study needed for a learner to progress from TOEIC 200 to TOEIC 400 is 250 hours. It takes about 350 hours for a student to move from TOEIC 200 to TOEIC 450.

Likewise, 90% of the teachers share the opinion that the time allocated for each unit in the syllabus is inadequate. The time for English 1 and English 2 is 30 periods and 45 periods respectively. In English 1, the teachers have to teach the first 3 units of the textbook. In English 2, they teach 4 units from unit 4 to unit 7. Also, they have to undertake the job of revising and marking all the students in a speaking test within the time frame. Teacher C points out that she can only conduct main activities required in the syllabus with time pressure. Teacher D says there is not enough time to cover the syllabus. In teacher F's perspective, every unit is too long, it has too much vocabulary and too many activities to complete.

7.3. Facilities

In general, the teachers are provided with necessary facilities for teaching and learning at Thuyloi University. However, certain

classrooms are not well-equipped. For example, teacher J and H say room 306 A5 does not have an over-head projector. In teacher F's opinion, the classroom layout in room 305 A5 is not good and it needs rearranging the spare tables and chairs.

Another problem that teacher E and G mention is that the teachers in the English division have classes in different buildings. When some teachers have classes in the same building simultaneously, there are not enough speakers for them and some teachers have to share the speakers.

Three teachers comment that fixed tables and chairs are not suitable for a language class. Teacher A says this is difficult for students to join different groups when practicing. In their opinion, it would be better if the classrooms are equipped with movable tables and chairs.

4/10 teachers say that some computers need adaptors in order to get them connected with over-head projectors, which is sometimes problematic. Teacher C says there are some hindrances with the technical devices, which takes time to adjust.

7.4. Mix-ability classes

In an English class for economics and management students, there is a wide range of language proficiency levels because there is no placement test. 60% of the teachers agree that it is hard for the teachers to adjust their lesson plans to fit the learning needs of all the individual students from the poor performing to the excellent ones. Especially, 6 teachers point out that many poor performing students find it difficult to keep up with the other students. They may be discouraged and reluctant to take part in class activities.

7.5. Students' passive attitudes towards learning English

9/10 teachers agree that certain students do not have active attitudes towards learning English. Teacher H says these students are shy. They dare not speak English as they

think they will make mistakes. They are afraid of losing their face. In teacher G's opinion, certain students are also not familiar to learner-centered education in which there are a lot of collaborative activities like pair work, group work. Instead of taking part in the activities, they just keep silent. Teacher B says certain students have low intrinsic motivation in learning English and lacks extrinsic motivation. They do not know the reasons why they have to study English. They just want to pass the exams with mark C or D.

7.6. The coursebook

90% of the teachers say that the textbook "Market Leader" also poses certain obstacles for the students. Teacher J says it contains a large number of new words – English for economics, a new field for the first-year students. Students may be overwhelmed by a large vocabulary words. Teacher B and G point out that there are a lot of listening exercises with difficult vocabulary and structures. In accordance with teacher C, some knowledge is beyond what students can absorb.

8. CONCLUSION

Hopefully, the teachers in the English division can overcome the difficulties with the support from the Board of Trustees of Thuyloi university, by applying modern teaching methodology, sharing experience and learning with and from the colleagues in their English division as well as other colleagues in different universities.

9. REFERENCE

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