




Effectiveness of experiential learning in teaching Vietnamese language in primary schools: Perspectives of teachers and administrators

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 24 October 2022

Revised: 28 December 2022

Accepted: 11 January 2023

Published: 20 January 2023

Keywords

Administrators

Experiential learning

Primary school

Teachers

Vietnamese language.

Experiential learning is an important component of both teaching and learning during the curriculum reform that is implemented in the new general teaching curriculum. Combining theoretical study with experiential learning allows students to maximize their knowledge and skills, which is beneficial to education in general and the teaching of the Vietnamese language in particular. The purpose of this study was to investigate the viewpoints held by educators and administrators regarding the efficiency of experiential learning in the context of the Vietnamese language classroom. One hundred fifty classroom instructors and nine principals from elementary schools around the country volunteered their time to participate in the survey. In the study, quantitative approaches were used with descriptive analysis to examine the collected data. According to the findings, the majority of educators and administrators were in complete agreement that providing students with opportunities for experiential learning helped them feel more comfortable and engaged in studying Vietnamese language. Even while there were some educators and school administrators who did not believe that experiential learning helped students become more responsible for themselves, others, and the community as a whole, the consensus was that it did. Experiential learning has been shown to be an effective method for teaching pupils the Vietnamese language, as demonstrated by the evidence presented in the current study. When designing a curriculum for a classroom, encouraging students to participate in experiential activities and programs should be a priority.

Contribution/Originality: This study adds to our understanding of experiential learning in the context of a Vietnamese language classroom. This study found that educators and administrators were unanimous in their belief that providing students with opportunities for experiential learning made them feel more at ease and engaged in studying Vietnamese.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the educational system has been predicated mostly on memorization and teacher-led instruction, with students playing a largely subservient role in the educational process. Students all over the world participate in a wide variety of educational activities that are designed to help them acquire the habit of learning and become learners for the rest of their lives. The trends in education for the twenty-first century are student-centered, technology-infused, inquiry-based, and experiential learning (EL) (Habib, Nagata, & Watanabe, 2021). In recent years, educators have been increasingly introducing into the classroom more

active learning strategies, such as experiential learning. In addition, a new method in education and student-centered learning that has garnered a lot of attention is called constructivist learning, which is founded on the idea that learning should be an active process.

Learning is a process that occurs throughout all stages of life and human situations and involves the development, transformation, and disposal of ideas as a result of experience. This process occurs throughout an individual's entire life. A high-quality learning environment includes engaging actively, fostering collaboration with others, and promoting relevant tasks with real results (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010). Experiential education is widely regarded as an effective teaching strategy for students to learn new knowledge and improve existing knowledge frameworks (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). Students are required to collaborate with one another and learn from one another through a variety of hands-on activities when engaging in experiential learning, which shifts the learning design from being centered on the teacher to being more of a semi-structured approach. In this process, the teacher's role is to facilitate rather than direct the student's progress (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Experiential learning reports learning occurs when students use hands-on, task-oriented activities and contextually apply prior knowledge to real-life situations (Wenger, 2009). Learning through experience involves students being actively involved in the learning process at various points throughout the course. Experiential learning allows students to efficiently transform classroom and textbook knowledge into their understanding by participating in real-life activities (Chan, 2012). Experiential learning theory highlights the significance of participants learning by doing and reflecting on their experiences (Bhat, 2001).

Experiential learning is an active learning where students engage in their learning through direct participation, experience, analysis, and reflection (Habib et al., 2021; Indriayu, 2019). Experiential learning occurs in its purest form whenever the student is roused from the role of passive listener to that of the active respondent, which can be as easy as asking for a show of hands in class (Hawtrey, 2007). In addition, Voukelatou (2019) reported that students are the driving force behind the learning process, and their "learning style" and "thinking" influence the effectiveness of learning. Students' thoughts, feelings, and openness to new experiences are at the heart of experiential learning, which is centered on the educational process. Collaboration between students and teachers is an important aspect of teaching and learning because it enables teachers to more actively participate in the learning process and have a better understanding of the content being covered. Experiential teaching techniques include question-and-answer, role play, model interviews, discussion, brainstorming, group work and confrontation (Canino, Zanelli, Seri, Degli Esposti, & Torreggiani, 2021; Voukelatou, 2019). Experiential learning is a method of teaching that entails active experimentation (Breunig, 2017). According to Kolb's experiential learning theory, learning is a process in which knowledge is constructed by grasping and transforming experience.

Kolb's theory of experiential learning is still frequently employed today, despite the fact that a great number of other theories of learning via experience have been developed. The experiential learning proposed by Kolb recognizes that the process of learning is inherently contentious and calls for the learner to approach and negotiate a variety of learning circumstances utilizing a wide range of skills. According to Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis (2014) learning through experience can be regarded as a cycle of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. A learner's actual interaction with the environment or a particular learning event constitutes a concrete experience for that learner. Learners are able to analyze their experiences from a variety of viewpoints when they engage in reflective observation. During the stage of abstract conceptualization, the learner will draw conclusions from their experiences and combine the insights they have gained from those experiences into new ideas regarding the learning experience. During the active experimentation stage, the learner applies freshly learned concepts and consequences to new learning environments. These concepts and consequences were first taught during the abstract conceptualization stage. Traditional methods of instruction center on the presentation of theoretical material in the context of conventional classrooms, followed by opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of this material via written

examinations. The experiential learning theory proposed by Kolb has significant ramifications, the most important of which are that there should be adequate space in the learning process for each modality, as well as comprehension, intention, and extension. A higher level of learning can be achieved through the utilization of a hybrid learning process that combines different fundamental learning modes.

Experiential learning outcomes have received a great deal of attention in research (Baldwin, Persing, & Magnuson, 2004; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009). Learning outcomes of experiential learning programs have been well documented (Coker, Heiser, Taylor, & Book, 2017; Morris, 2016; Tomkins & Ulus, 2016) particularly in language learning (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019; Knutson, 2003; Moreno-López, Ramos-Sellman, Miranda-Aldaco, & Gomis, 2017). Experiential learning encourages students to analyze and apply knowledge to real-world situations (Zelechowski, Riggs Romaine, & Wolbransky, 2017). This mode of education includes not only discussion and explanation of concepts and knowledge, but also feedback, review, and the transfer of knowledge and abilities to new situations. The experiential learning approach gives learners more responsibility and directly involves them in problem-solving and appropriate behavior in appropriate situations (Kong, 2021). Recent research shows that experiential learning is still a major factor in improving learning outcomes (Coker et al., 2017; Morris, 2016).

Wurdinger and Marlow (2005) have reported that some guidelines to integrate experiential learning into a course includes (i) use a main project or field experience to instruct learning throughout the course; (ii) use a combination of classroom activities and external experiences to keep the course interesting and engaging; (iii) connect everything; (iv) ensure that activities are both challenging and manageable; (v) provide students with clear expectations; (vi) give students enough time to "identify, clarify, and stay focused on their issue"; and (vii) allow learners to change their direction mid-stream. According to a study by Abu-Assab (2015) teachers reported that experiential learning assists learner to take responsibility and enhance their self-confidence by a high percentage. In addition, the results also showed that experiential learning helped students cooperate more with others and participate in social activities. Other findings indicated that implementing experiential learning in language classrooms helped students feel more comfortable with the tasks and skills of this subject (Knutson, 2003).

Lazzarich (2021) explored effective tactics and learning styles in the classroom instruction of the Croatian language at the lower level of primary school. The Croatian language is a difficult subject to teach, thus the functional instruction of language and literature necessitates the application of deliberate methods and procedures. The application of collaborative, experiential, and self-regulated learning was monitored by Lazzarich (2021). Guidelines for dealing with pupils in the classroom are included along with a variety of inventive processes for the early stages of language development. It is essential to promote conditions in which students become aware of their learning process and make decisions regarding how to accomplish the intended learning outcomes and objectives. Menon (2021) provides a brief history of folklore and discusses the potential of folk tales and other historical narratives as a useful tool for Experiential Learning. Stories have the inherent capacity to captivate learners and assure their active participation and reflection. In addition to providing opportunities for developing language and other skills, Menon (2021) discovered that exposure to folklore can also raise awareness of environmental, social, and gender-related issues, and that the use of folklore can help learners weave across continents and cultures and extend their learning beyond the classroom.

Helate, Metaferia, and Gezahegn (2022) have discovered that experiential learning is a tenet of teacher professional development. However, there are few research examining experiential learning from an integrated approach in the context of English as a Foreign Language and at the elementary school level. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the experiential learning engagement of English as a Foreign Language teachers in primary schools from these viewpoints. Helate et al. (2022) chose a contemporaneous mixed study strategy to investigate the cases, selecting 186 teachers for the questionnaire and eight teachers for the interviews. The results suggested that the majority of English language instructors in elementary schools participated in professional development activities.

The elementary education curriculum in Vietnam requires students to take Vietnamese language classes as one of their required subjects. The goals of experiential activities in primary school are to develop positive habits in daily life; to work hard; to take on responsibilities at home and at school; to practice self-assessment and self-regulation; to form communicative and cultural behaviors; to foster group cooperation; and to develop problem-solving skills. These goals can be accomplished by encouraging students to participate in a variety of activities throughout the school day (MOET, 2018). Students who study Vietnamese are better able to enhance their language abilities, satisfy the demands placed on them by society in terms of communication, and think critically. Traditional classroom-based learning cannot satisfy the requirements for teaching and learning Vietnamese in the new General Education Curriculum. As a result of its didactic, passive, and standardized nature, experiential learning must be developed by teachers in place of classroom-based learning in the traditional sense. The dynamic and hands-on aspect of experiential learning tends to make it easier to achieve a profound level of comprehension.

The use of experiential learning in the classroom has received a relatively small amount of attention from researchers in Vietnam. This is especially surprising given the prevalence of experiential learning in Vietnamese language instruction at the basic level. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the perspectives of primary school teachers and administrators regarding the efficacy of experiential learning in the classroom setting of teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants and Procedure

A total of 150 teachers and 9 administrators from three primary schools participated in the study. Among these, a total of 18 teachers were males (12.0%) and 132 females (88.0%) while 1 administrator was male (11.1%) and 8 were females (88.9%). The age ranged from below 30 to 55 years, including 63 teachers (42%) aged between 46 and 55 years and 8 administrators (88.9%) aged between 30 and 45 years. In terms of teaching experience, all the administrators had more than 10 years of teaching, and most of teachers had between 1 and 10 years of teaching, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics.

Characteristics	Teachers (N=150)	Administrators (N=9)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Gender		
Male	18 (12)	1 (11.1)
Female	132 (88)	8 (88.9)
Age		
Below 30 years	42 (28)	0
30 – 45 Years	45 (30)	8 (88.9)
45 – 55 Years	63 (42)	1 (11.1)
Teaching experience		
Under one year	41 (27)	0
1-5 Years	41 (27)	0
5-10 Years	35 (24)	0
Over 10 years	33 (22)	9 (100)

The gathering of the data was carried out in accordance with ethical principles and a detailed plan. The participants agreed to take part in the survey on their own free will and had the option to withdraw at any moment. On the same day that their data was collected, participants were given the opportunity to give their informed consent. The questionnaire for the research project was split into two parts. In the first section, a set of informational and socio-demographic questions were developed. These questions focused on topics such as gender, years of teaching experience, and average age.

2.2. Measurement

The author designed a questionnaire comprising 11 items to investigate the opinions of teachers and administrators about the advantages of experiential learning in primary school. The questionnaire used five statements rated on a 5-item Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 2 = "disagree", 3 = "neutral", 4 = "agree", 5 = "strongly agree").

Table 2. Teachers' perspective on the effectiveness of experiential learning in teaching Vietnamese language. (in percentage)

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Helping students feel more comfortable and interested in the Vietnamese language	0	0	0	46.0	54.0
Stimulating curiosity and interest in learning Vietnamese language	0	0	42.0	28.7	29.3
Helping students improve reading skills	0	0	0	53.5	46.7
Helping students improve writing skills	0	0	0	52.0	48.0
Helping students improve speaking skills	0	0	0	50.7	49.3
Helping students improve listening skills	0	0	0	53.3	46.7
Enhancing self-confidence	0	0	36.7	28.0	35.3
Enhancing self-control and reasoning ability	0	0	32.0	32.7	35.3
Taking responsibility for self, others, and community	0	22.0	28.0	23.3	26.7
Increasing the desire to participate in social activities	0	0	37.3	28.0	34.7
Showing good coordination with and respect for other members	0	0	29.3	34.7	36.0

3. RESULTS

Table 2 shows that the majority of teachers (54.0%) strongly agreed and agreed (46.0%) with the statement "Helping students feel more comfortable and interested in the Vietnamese language"; (28.7 %) agreed and strongly agreed (29.3%) with the statement "Stimulating curiosity and interest in learning Vietnamese language" while 42% remained neutral; (53.5%) agreed and strongly agreed (46.7%) with the statement "Helping students improve reading skills"; (52.0%) agreed and strongly agreed (48.0%) with the statement "Help students improve writing skills"; (50.7%) agreed and strongly agreed (49.3%) with the statement "Help students improve speaking skills"; (53.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (46.7%) with the statement "Help students improve listening skills"; (28.0%) agreed and strongly agreed (35.3%) with the statement "Enhancing self-confidence"; (32.7%) agreed and strongly agreed (35.3%) with the statement "Enhancing self-control and reasoning ability"; (23.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (26.7%) with the statement "Taking responsibility for self, others, and community" while this was the only statement where 22% disagreed; (28.0%) agreed and strongly agreed (34.7%) with the statement "Increasing the desire to participate in social activities"; and (34.7%) agreed and strongly agreed (36.0%) with the statement "Showing good coordination with and respect for other members".

Table 3. Administrators' perspective on the effectiveness of experiential learning in teaching Vietnamese language.

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Helping students feel more comfortable and interested in the Vietnamese language	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Stimulating curiosity and interest in learning Vietnamese language	0	0	22.2	22.2	55.6
Helping students improve reading skills	0	0	0	22.2	77.8
Helping students improve writing skills	0	0	0	44.4	55.6
Helping students improve speaking skills	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Helping students improve listening skills	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Enhancing self-confidence	0	0	55.6	33.3	11.1
Enhancing self-control and reasoning ability	0	0	55.6	22.2	22.2
Taking responsibility for self, others, and community	0	33.3	22.2	33.3	11.1
Increasing the desire to participate in social activities	0	0	33.3	33.3	33.3
Showing good coordination with and respect for other members	0	0	44.4	33.3	22.2

Table 3 reveals that the majority of teachers (66.7%) strongly agreed and agreed (33.3%) with the statement "Helping students feel more comfortable and interested in the Vietnamese language"; (22.2%) agreed and strongly agreed (55.6%) with the statement "Stimulating curiosity and interest in learning Vietnamese language"; (22.2%) agreed and strongly agreed (77.8%) with the statement "Helping students improve reading skills"; (44.4%) agreed and strongly agreed (55.6%) with the statement "Help students improve writing skills"; (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (66.7%) with the statement "Help students improve speaking skills"; (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (66.7%) with the statement "Help students improve listening skills"; (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (11.1%) with the statement "Enhancing self-confidence"; (22.2%) agreed and strongly agreed (22.2%) with the statement "Enhancing self-control and reasoning ability"; (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (11.1%) with the statement "Taking responsibility for self, others, and community"; (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (33.3%) with "Increasing the desire to participate in social activities"; and (33.3%) agreed and strongly agreed (22.2%) with the statement "Showing good coordination with and respect for other members".

The results of Table 2 and 3 indicate that teachers and administrators strongly agreed with the statement "Helping students feel more comfortable and interested in the Vietnamese language". While some teachers and administrators reported that they disagreed with the statement "Taking responsibility for self, others, and community" (22.0% and 33.3%).

4. DISCUSSION

Previous studies on the implementation of experiential learning at primary schools, as well as the attitudes of teachers and administrators towards this teaching strategy, is supplemented by the current study. The following discoveries emerged from our investigation: first, the vast majority of educators and school officials were in complete agreement that providing pupils with opportunities for experiential learning helped them become more at ease and engaged in the Vietnamese language; second, experiential learning is beneficial to students in terms of helping them take responsibility for themselves, others, and their communities; nevertheless, there are some educators and administrators that do not agree with this.

Based on the findings presented in Tables 1 and 2, it is notable that student who study the Vietnamese language through experiential learning find that it helps them feel more comfortable and engaged in the language. Experiential learning activities have the ability to improve learning outcomes while also increasing interest and comfort level. This can be explained by the fact that they are more engaging. As a result of participating in various experiences, students are able to acquire a more profound and comprehensive understanding, as well as additional information and the relevant skills. Knutson (2003) found that when experiential learning was used in language classes, students felt more comfortable with the tasks and skills. According to Hoover, Giambatista, Sorenson, and Bommer (2010) experiential learning activities significantly help in this process because they allow students to develop associations between new tasks and previous knowledge.

Experiential learning allows students to process information more effectively, make connections, reflect on previous skills, and apply new knowledge. Experiential learning activities allow students to integrate conceptual and factual knowledge in the discipline context and assist students in developing more comprehensive understandings or conceptions leading to more advanced learning (Burch et al., 2019). When students have more opportunities to process information, integrate conceptual knowledge, and develop more complete understandings or conceptions, it helps those feel more comfortable and interested in learning Vietnamese language. When students have more opportunities to process information, integrate conceptual knowledge, and develop more complete understandings or conceptions. According to the findings of this survey, only a small percentage of educators and school administrators disagreed with the notion that students gaining responsibility for themselves, others, and their communities via experiential learning. Within studies of experiential learning in language classrooms,

experiential learning helped students to take responsibility by a high percentage (Abu-Assab, 2015). In contrast, this study suggests that experiential learning helps students with the lowest percentage.

When compared to the standard classroom setting, the experiential classroom requires a different role of the teacher. To successfully implement experiential learning in the study of the Vietnamese language, educators should receive extensive training, play the role of facilitator and supporter, put students at the center of the learning process, and involve them in the process of decision-making and problem-solving. The students need to be encouraged by their teachers, who should provide them with information, suggestions, and meaningful learning experiences. Teachers use activities such as role-playing, learning through clubs and groups, and reality discovery activities into the study of the Vietnamese language throughout the teaching process. This helps to guarantee that students learn the language in a meaningful and efficient manner.

In addition, the goal of experiential learning is not to provide students with the maximum number of feasible encounters. Students are able to advance their education by pausing to consider how their experiences have shaped them. If students do not reflect on their experiences and are guided through reflections on those experiences in order to assist them cement their takeaways, they run the risk of leaving with a jumble of activities and no synthesis of what they learned. Make the students' reflections on the experience part of their academic coursework and require them to explain how they put the knowledge they gained into practice. In this role, educators also have a deeper comprehension of the challenges faced by pupils as well as the opportunities presented to them. Teachers are responsible for organizing appropriate activities for their students, fostering the development of their students' abilities, and forging stronger relationships between themselves and their pupils.

5. CONCLUSION

It is common knowledge that engaging in individualized forms of experiential learning can be beneficial. Students' knowledge, abilities, and overall learning outcomes can all be improved with the use of effective strategies like experiential learning exercises. On the other hand, in the context of Vietnam, only a small number of recent research investigate the application of experiential learning to the study of the Vietnamese language. According to the findings of this study, both teachers and administrators indicate that experiential learning increases students' learning outcomes. These outcomes include reading, listening, writing, speaking abilities, self-confidence, and the ability to work together. As a result, it is important to make sure that activities for experiential learning are carried out in a comprehensive and efficient manner. As a consequence of this, the incorporation of experiential learning into educational curricula needs to be opened up to educational institutions and teachers so that they can actively choose the content and methods of instruction that are suitable for the specific conditions and circumstances of their respective settings

The current study does have some limitations, one of which is the relatively small sample size of administrators and teachers that participated as participants. We were only able to perform the research at three primary schools in the northern part of Vietnam, which is another constraint. Therefore, a larger number of administrators and instructors should be spread to other locations in Vietnam for the purpose of prospective study in the future. This will result in a better knowledge of the application of experiential learning in the Vietnamese language at the primary level. In addition, as compared to the longitudinal form, the cross-sectional design presents a number of glaring flaws and limitations. A longitudinal study, in which the same participant group is measured at multiple points during the course of the investigation, should be investigated further.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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