

***A Study on the Application of Field Trips in English Teaching in Vietnam:
Effectiveness and Solutions***

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Abstract

It has been years since the dawn of field trips which have been widely used as an effective tool in foreign language teaching and learning. With their advantages, field trips perform the functions of improving the language as well as social skills for learners. To find out the positive effects of field trips, the paper focuses on giving an overview of field trips, analyzing the purposes of field trips in English teaching. Concurrently with the theoretical analysis of field trips, the research deals with the application of field trips in Tourism English and General English teaching in Vietnam. Based on in-depth interviews and a quantitative research through a survey among 220 students from 2 separate universities in Vietnam, the research has drawn out the major effects including improving students' self-confidence, students' language skills and soft-skills, students' competence in applying theory to reality, students' language learning motivation that field trips have had on language learners, on the basis of which the recommendations and suggestions to improve students' language skills are suggested.

Keywords: field trips, reality of field trips application, solutions to field trips application

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Introduction

The global context has rapidly increased demand for English in any socio-economic fields. In an attempt to find the possible ways to improve their students' language skills, educators have tuned in a variety of possible methods of which field trips are considered to be one of the best solutions that bring their students to the real environment of language learning. With the purposes of finding the best solutions to applying field trips to language teaching and learning, the paper aims at finding the answers to the three following researching questions:

- (1) What is the field trip and how is it applied in foreign language teaching and learning?
- (2) What are the effects of field trips application in Tourism English and General English teaching in Vietnam?
- (3) What are the possible ways to applying field trips in foreign language teaching in Vietnam?

Literature review

Overview of field trips

The concept of field trips have been mentioned in education for a long time. Historically modern day field trips have their origin in Europe. According to Eugen Raph Brady (1972), prior 1900 European students and teachers were involved in such trips. Dessy Utami (2014) states that the field trip is a technique to provide students with opportunities to have direct experience out-of-school life. In addition, Jordan (2014) states that field trips technique can extend the resource available to students in the classroom. They expand learning by giving the students access to the real thing. They illustrate and permit students to experience with what they have learnt.

Atyeo (1939) emphasizes that field trips include any visit to an out-of-school setting and traditionally they are categorized in one of the three ways: academic, non-academic, and extra-curricular. Krepel and Du Vall (1981) define field trips as the trips which training institutions organize and implement to achieve certain educational purposes. Also according to these authors, these field trips bring students to new learning environment with tangible learning materials which they can "touch", "feel", observe, and get involved in.

From the mentioned above, field trip can be understood as a kind of a visit that is implemented in the environment out of the 4-walled classroom. Physically, field trip is any activities organized outside the regular classroom. With respect to purposes, field trip performs the function of a simulating activity to achieve a certain goal not effectively reached by any other means. Let's take a lesson of hotel reservation for an example. To realize the objective of the lesson, there is no other solution better than taking students to a hotel where students are able to "touch" the knowledge in the roles of receptionists and tourists. Similarly, when learning about business design, students will conduct their assignment better if a site visit to a company is taken instead of any other means. With those lessons, if students are not given an opportunity of experiencing it, the lesson's objectives are difficult to be achieved.

Field trips in English teaching

Like in many other fields, field trips in English teaching have become an effective tool which have been widely applied in many countries since its initial appearance.

Dessy Utani (2014) considered field trips as the most of the effective device of English teaching and learning, as it gives both adventure and experience to students. Hughes and Moore (2014) state that field trips provides possibility for students to remember and to relate what have been studied and therefore it motivates them to learn.

From the statement, it can be assumed that the use of field trips will help students improve their English because this technique makes them happy to do the learning activities. The teacher and the students will have a fun class, and consequently it will improve students' achievement.

Types of field trips

Field trips can be classified into many different types including:

On-campus trips during class time

Off-campus trips during class time

Day trips

Extended overnight trips

Semesters Abroad.

Purposes of field trips in foreign language teaching and learning

It is obvious that the normal English teaching and learning processes occur in classroom, and it makes English language students get bored with the lesson. With the application of field trips in foreign language teaching, the burden of how to get the class much more attractive has been lessened. Many pedagogical scholars have proved this. Jordan (2014) emphasizes:

“Field trip technique can extend the resource available to students in the classroom. They expand learning by giving the students access to real thing. They illustrate and permit experience with what has been reading about, seen on television or computer software. Teacher include field trips in their units of study for this purpose. Field trips are linked to the classroom because they are contextualized within the classroom curriculum. Teachers choose from museum programs and exhibits to expand and reinforce desired concepts”

Some scholars agreed that field trips have built better relationships between students and students, between students and teachers. According to these educators, field trips also improve self-concept. Evan (1991) stated that students experienced being a leadership role, increased self-esteem, and strengthened relationships with peers as a result of a field trip.

Field Trips are also factors creating cooperative learning. As mentioned by Barbara Marras Mannar (1995) through field trips students may have a way of explaining things that seem to be more understandable to fellow students. It's also less

threatening to respond as a group rather than as an individual. Smith (1993) clarified that in a cooperative-learning situation, slower learners do much better than otherwise.

It can be seen that well-prepared field trips brings students a variety of benefits from providing them with exciting learning experiences to motivating them in the learning process.

In English teaching, field trips is considered a tool to bridge the gap between theory and reality.

Firstly, the speaking contexts which students take part in during the field trip is authentic. The field trip participants are given opportunities to take part in a real communicative situation where they are supposed to communicate with real people to achieve certain purposes.

Secondly, getting students out of brick-walled learning environment enables them to connect and correlate what they have learned from books to the real world so that much of theoretical knowledge is tested with reality.

Thirdly, it is possible to do so many different speaking activities with students when they are guided out of the classroom and into the world.

Additionally, the important thing that field trips bring to learners is excitement of new places, new cultures, new people to interact with , and new opportunities to practice the language.

Overview on the application of Field Trip Method to English teaching in Vietnam (an analysis of 2 Vietnam Universities: Sao Do University and FPT University)

Contents of textbooks and syllabus

The success of field trips application much depends on the textbooks and syllabus. Texts books and syllabus must be designed in such a way that field trips can be applied.

To find out the reality of the contents of the textbooks and the syllabus, the research analyzes the foundation for preparing the textbooks and syllabus and takes an overlook at the training programs of Tourism English at Sao Do University and General English Training Program at FPT University.

Foundation for preparing the textbooks and syllabus

For Sao Do University, the textbooks of Tourism English are adapted based on the outcome standards of English (VSTEP), VTOS (Vietnam Tourism Occupational Skills Standards), based on the real requirements of travel companies.

As a modern university, FPT aims at providing students with adequate English for studying in their academic years and future jobs, the foundation for designing syllabus is that students reach the B2 level (CFR).

Training programs

The training program of Tourism English includes 6 main courses: Tourism English 1, Tourism English 2, Tourism English 3, Tourism English 4, Tourism English 5, Tourism English 6.

Tourism English 1 : Gives an overview of tourism, tourism designation, travel companies, travel agencies, transportation in tourism, accommodation, tourism marketing, airlines

Tourism English 2: Focuses on English in Hospitality: English for hotel and restaurant staff.

Tourism English 3: Focuses on English used in talking about geographical location, natural conditions like climate, rivers, islands; English in customs, religions, festivals, handicraft villages, traditional food of Vietnam. Besides, students are trained with skills of making tour itinerary, making tour commentary, skills of making presentation.

Tourism English 4: Provides students with vocabulary and structures of geographical location, climate and attractions of Vietnam. In addition, students are trained with skills of making tour commentary and skills of tour guiding in famous destinations.

Tourism English 5: Focuses on making presentation and tour guiding skills in English. Students set up the tours in historical places, handicraft villages, natural destinations, tour guiding in coaches.

Similarly, FPT University English courses are divided in to 6 different levels from fundamental to intermediate. The training program focuses on 4 skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writings The language proficiency students are required to achieved is B2-C1 (CEFR).

From the above mentioned, it can be seen that the contents of the training courses of Tourism English and General English are suitable for field trips.

Summary of field trips in Tourism English and General English Teaching **Field trips of Hospitality English**

(1) Tasks

- Students are given the tasks of solving the procedures in check in and check out activities in English (Tourism English 1).
- Acting as waiters and waitresses in restaurants, taking orders, dealing with complaints (Tourism English 2)

(2) Location

- Paradise Cruise, Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh

Field Trips in Tourism English 3,4,5

Table 1: Field trips in Tourism English 3,4,5

<i>Courses</i>	<i>Field Trip Requirements</i>
<i>English Tourism 3</i>	Tour guiding in Bat Trang ceramics
	Tour guiding in Dong Ho Folk painting
<i>English Tourism 4</i>	Tour guiding in Con Son Pagoda
	Tour guiding in Kiep Bac Temple
	Tour guiding in Chu Van An Temple
<i>English Tourism 5</i>	Designing and conducting tour of North West
	Designing and conducting tour of Vietnam Central

In the courses in Tourism English 3,4,5 students are required to use English to make tour commentary and conduct the tours. The table shows that in the training program, students are asked to complete 8 field trips in different locations.

To complete these, in the process of conducting the above mentioned field trips, the following steps have been applied:

(1) Preparation of language knowledge and knowledge of destinations: To complete the field trips, students are required to get adequate knowledge of languages. In additions, knowledge of destinations is what students need to prepare before conducting the field trips.

(2) Practice through video clips or powerpoint: After preparing necessary conditions of language and knowledge, students practice making presentations with the help of the video clips and PowerPoint.

(3) Conducting field trips:

- Giving tasks to groups: The class is divided into different groups. Each group completes its own tasks like logistics, tour guiding in coaches, tour guiding in destinations...
- In conducting the field trips, students are asked to complete the tasks of a tour guide.
- Assessment is based on the detailed criteria including the use of language, knowledge, and ways of dealing with situations in tour guiding.

Field trips in General English Teaching

With its flexibility in the syllabus design, the General English courses are imbedded with the field trips whose contents are correspondent with the syllabus contents. Based on these, the author has conducted the field trips as mentioned below:

English 1,2,3: Field Trips in the Culture Center of US Embassy. On these mentioned trips, students are placed in pronunciation workshops, clubs, as well as Talk shows held at the center.

Additionally, during these courses some other trips have been also carried out such as the field trip in Hanoi old quarter, Museum of Ethnology...The tasks of these trips aim at forcing students to communicate with foreigners in the authentic environment.

Table 2: Field Trip Proposal for Level 3 English students

FIELD TRIP PROPOSAL FOR ENGLISH-LEVEL 3

Place: Mai Chau, Hoa Binh

Transportation: Coach

Accommodation: Home-Stay

Topic: Unit 1: Make Small Talks

Unit 7: Holidays and Traditions

Unit 10: Beautiful World

II. Objectives:

- The students teams discover:

+ Cultures and Traditions of ethnic groups in Mai Chau (Unit 1,7)

+ Geographical features of the valley (Unit 10)

- Skills to be obtained:

+ Language skills: Students revise all the vocabulary & grammatical structures necessary to accomplish the given tasks.

+ Other soft skills: Organizational skills (logistics of transportation, food, beverage, accommodation).

-Socializing skills (organizing games and campfire activities).

III. Requirements:

Duties for each team:

1. Taking part in all the team building activities of the trip

(Games to revise vocabulary from TN3 & Academic Vocabulary in use)

2. Making a video

Introducing Mai Chau (its geographical features, traditions, customs...)

Talking with group of foreigners about the related topics)

IV. Notes:

1. The students must submit a compilation video of the full activity, as it will be counted for their PRESENTATION grade.

2. All students in each group MUST appear and speak on their videos.

3. Date of video submission: One week after the trip.

PROPOSED ITENERARY

FIELD TRIP HOA LAC CAMPUS- MAI CHAU

(02 days, 01 night)

6,7 April 2018

1st Day:

6:30 am

- Leaving the campus

9:30am

- Arrival in Mai Chau.

10:30-18:00 pm

- Students' activities

19:00 pm –22:00 pm

- Activities

(games, music, dances)

2nd Day:

8:00-11:00 am

- Students' activities

11:00 am

- Lunch

14:00 pm

- Leaving Mai Chau

16:00 pm

- Arrival in Hoa Lac

Submitted by:

English 4,5,6: For the courses of General English levels 4,5,6, students are assigned with more willing tasks which require students to complete the video clips introducing the features of culture, history, gameshow...in popular tourist destinations. Also, during these outdoor programs learners' tasks are to conduct interview with foreigners based on the given topics.

Table 3: Field Trip Proposal for Level 6 English students

FIELD TRIP PROPOSAL FOR ENGLISH LEVEL 6 STUDENTS		
Place : <i>Paradise Cruise- Ha Long- Quang Ninh</i>		
Topics : <i>Introducing a tourist destination</i>		
I. Objectives:		
+ To visit a real company: organizational structure, facilities, working style.		
+ To practice skills of consecutive interpretation		
Topic: Talk Show about a well-known tourist destination		
Topic: Introduction of a well-known tourist destination		
- Skills to be obtained:		
+ Speaking Skills: Students practicing speaking to introduce a famous tourist destination.		
+ Other soft skills:		
<i>Organizational skills (logistics of transportation, food, beverage, accommodation).</i>		
<i>Socializing skills (meeting and talking with representatives of companies).</i>		
II. Requirements:		
Groups	Details	Speaking Task
Part 1		
Group 1	Ha Noi	Group 4
Group 2	Hai Duong	Group 2
Group 3	Bac Ninh	Group 3
Group 4	Quang Ninh	Group 1
Part 2		
4 Groups	<i>Participation in TALK SHOW with Representatives of PARADISE CRUISE</i>	
<p align="center">PROPOSED ITINERARY FIELD TRIP HOA LAC CAMPUS- HA LONG (01 day)</p> <p>5:30 am – Leaving the campus</p> <p>9:30am – Arriving in HA LONG</p> <p>+ 9h:30-12:30 pm : <i>Visiting LA VELA CRUISE</i></p> <p><i>Talking with La Vela Staff (cruise staff & managers)</i></p> <p><i>La Vela Tour</i></p> <p>+ 13:00-14:00 : Lunch</p> <p>+ 14:00-16:00 : Students' activities</p> <p>8:30 - Arriving in Hoa Lac</p> <p align="right">Submitted by:</p>		

Effectiveness of the Field Trips

To find out how students assess the field trips, a survey was conducted among 110 Tourism-majored students from Sao Do University and 110 students from FPT University randomly. 220 students have shown their agreement that the field trips are chances for students to use real English in real contexts related to the job requirements.

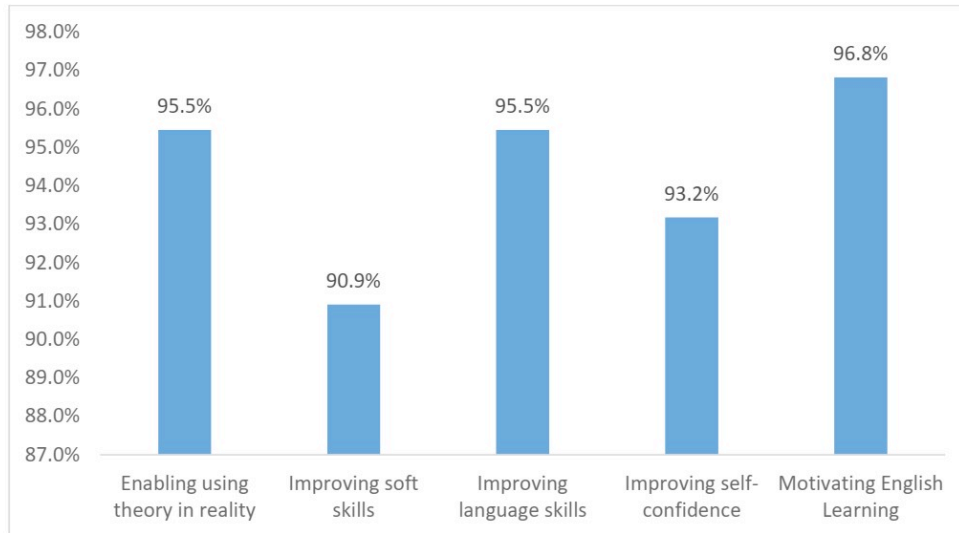


Figure 1: Students' satisfaction to field trips

From the figure, it is obvious that over 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the field trips' activities measured by the criteria of enabling using theory in reality, improving soft skills. Specially, 96.8% admitted that field trips inspired their learning process as well as improving language skills (95.5%). In more details, 95.5% of the surveyed shared the same idea that field trips activities assist students in their application of theory to reality. 90.9% belongs to improving soft skills, improving soft skills accounted for 95.5%.

In addition, to give a panorama on how students are satisfied with the field trips activities, the author has conducted in-depth interviews with 12 students who were randomly selected. Most of the interviewees share the similar comments on the benefits brought about by field trips activities. A majority of these students agreed on the creativeness, motivation, learning environment benefits that those outdoor activities have created.

"I think it's so good and useful for students, especially freshmen because they are new and strange to new university environment. I remember that my first field trip in Mai Chau in Top-notch 2 is very interesting and exciting. Activities are interesting, attractive and destinations are wonderful. There are lots of team-building games that make our friendship closer and more united. We can understand more one another. Besides, it creates opportunity for us to practice English by doing project or assignment (interview foreigners – ask and talk to them about those places and so on). In short, the field trip in the English course is very necessary. (STD1)

Additionally, interviewees agreed that the field trips activities improved their communicative skills, “The most important thing I learned after the trip is how to be an open person, how I build my relationship with the people around me, especially the friends I just met when I first came University” (STD2).

The field trips activities also give students chances to communicate with foreigners “Secondly, I have become more confident. I would have more knowledge about destinations that I visited. Most importantly, I think I could improve my English skills when talking to foreigners. It was also the first time I had chance to talk directly to foreigners. (STD3)

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Field trips is one of the methods which should be applied in teaching English. From the research, it can be concluded that to make use of field trips in foreign language teaching and learning, it is necessary for the teachers and students to follow the steps as well as the solutions suggested in the paper. Additionally, taking the reality into the lessons is the shortest way to narrow the gaps between the in-door classrooms with the outside ones. By doing so, field trips shall be one of the most effective tools in foreign language teaching and learning.

Recommendations

By overviewing the theory of field trips and analyzing the reality of using field trips in tourism English teaching, the study has suggested 4 main solutions to improve students’ English skills. The solutions focusing on cooperating with businesses, creating real environment, renovating textbook and syllabus, renovating assessment shall be the good ways to improve students’ language skills.

The proposed solutions may be used as effective tools in foreign language teaching in general, in Tourism English teaching and learning in particular.

Creating real environment in training institutions: The fact shows that in the training institutions, there are adequate conditions for English teachers to set up field trips within the school (For example, when students of Electrical Engineering or Mechanical Engineering learn ESP, students are taken to the practice centers of Electrical Engineering and Electrical Engineering where they are given chances to experience the reality of the fields they are learning.

Creating relations with businesses: Cooperating with travel businesses is the best conditions for students to practice their English in the best ways. For tourism English, it is easy to cooperate with travel companies.

Designing package tours as field trips: By designing package tours as field trips, students will be given chances to take part in a journey in which they are assigned full of activities ranging from logistics, team building activities, and communicative activities.

AMAZING RACE
HANOI – MAI CHAU FIELD TRIP (2 days-01 night)
Suggestion

Mai Chau Valley

Mai Chau- amazing valley of hidden charm. Coming to Mai Chau to discover natural beauty and traditional values of ethnic groups. Chances to communicate with foreigners and attend social activities.




Itinerary

Day 01:

- Mai Chau Discovery
- Sun2 Campfire

Day 2:

- Class Competition
- Wrap up

Accommodation




Campfire

1. Music and Dance Performance
2. Mini-Games
3. Inter-class Competition



Budget (Group of 200 students)

2-day, 01-night Mai Chau Field Trip

- + Bus: 140,000VN
- + Entrance : 10,000 VND
- + Sound system renting: 8,000VND
- + B&B: 40,000 VND
- + Lunch (2):140,000 VND
- + Team Building: 40,000VND

Total:378,000 VND/person



Figure 2: Field Trip Intermarry Ha Noi- Mai Chau, Hoa Binh

AMAZING RACE
HANOI – HALONG FIELD TRIP (2 days-01 night)
Suggestion

Ha Long Bay

Ha Long- a must see for summit 2 students. Coming to Ha Long to get great chance of communication with foreigners, discovering purity and sweetness of nature.




Itinerary

Day 01:

- Beach Team Building Games
- Sun2 Gala

Day 2:

- Discovering nature
- Wrap up

Accommodation




Gala Dinner

1. Music and Dance Performance
2. Mini-Games
3. Talk show
4. Inter-class Competition



Budget

2-day, 01-night Ha Long Field Trip

- + Bus: 156,000 VND
- + Fee for beach using : 30,000 VND
- + Sound system renting: 12,000VND
- + B&B: 150,000 VND
- + Lunch (2):300,000 VND
- + Team Building: 40,000VND

Total:688,000 VND/person



Figure 3: Field Trip Intermarry Ha Noi- Ha Long, Quang Ninh

Preparing textbooks, syllabus: Renovating the contents of the textbooks and syllabus of ESP oriented in real conversations related to real situations of businesses.

Renovating the assessment: The contents of assessment need to be based on the real requirement of businesses. And the application of completing field trip tasks in teaching English is suitable.

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