

Combining diversified teaching methods in training Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students at Tan Trao University, Viet Nam

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Abstract

Currently, it is extremely important and urgent to improve the quality of Vietnamese language teaching and learning for Laotian students. Because Laotian students learn Vietnamese as a foreign language, do during the learning process, they often face many difficulties, especially when learning Specialized Vietnamese. Therefore, it is necessary to use a combination of teaching methods to teach Specialized Vietnamese in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to Laotian students. When teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students, lecturers need to use a combination of Vietnamese teaching methods to be effective, such as: communication method, direct method, interpreting method (mother tongue use method), Total Physical Response method, linguistic analysis method, modelling practice method. In fact, teaching at Tan Trao University showed that combined use of these teaching methods has brought practical effects in teaching Specialized Vietnamese Module for Laotian students.

Keywords: Teaching method, Specialized Vietnamese, communication method, direct method, interpreting method (mother tongue use method), Total Physical Response (TPR) method, linguistic analysis method, modelling practice method.

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1. Introduction

During the implementation of the international cooperation program between Tuyen Quang province and Xiang Khouang Province of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, from 2013 to 2021, Tan Trao University has received and trained 39 Laotian students. Therefore, the training in general and Vietnamese language teaching for Laotian students in particular is one of the international cooperation tasks which are specially valued by the leaders of Tan Trao University. According to Document No. 2053/QĐ-ĐHTT dated October 26, 2015 of the Rector of Tan Trao University on the promulgation of the Basic Vietnamese Curriculum Framework for Laotian students of Tan Trao University (including 1100 periods), Special Vietnamese Module includes 240 periods/1100 periods (accounting for 21.8%) with 75 periods/391 theory periods (accounting for 19.2%), 156 periods/659 practice periods (accounting for 23.7%), 9 theory periods/50 review and test periods (accounting for 18%). According to the payroll of the school years, I have been assigned to participate in building programs and teaching Special Vietnamese Module for Laotian students at Tan Trao University. This teaching reality shows that because many Laotian students learn Vietnamese as a foreign language, they face many difficulties, greatly affecting their learning and use of Vietnamese in the future. Consequently, it is very critical and urgent to learn and use a combination of Vietnamese teaching methods (TMs) to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students today. Methods need to be coordinated in use by Vietnamese teachers (VTs) such as: communication method, direct method, interpreting method (mother tongue (MT) use method), Total Physical Response (TPR) method, linguistic analysis method, modelling practice method.

Because Vietnamese for Laotian students is a second language, in the process of learning Specialized Vietnamese, they often make mistakes in phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and writing. These language errors significantly affect their practice of language skills of Specialized Vietnamese. As a result, teaching skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students needs to be used in combination with many language TMs.

Research history indicated that it is very necessary and effective to use a combination of TMs for people who are starting to learn a new language (except MT) because it will help learners acquire new languages easily [1, p. 17].

Because the main function of language is communication, in traditional Vietnamese TMs, communication method is a teaching method (TM) very important. Communication method is a language teaching method based on speech, based on lively announcements, on organizing the process of communication in language effectively in typical speaking situations and in specific speaking situations. This method is associated with modelling practice method [2, p. 84].

In the textbook "Vietnamese teaching method", volume two, the authors mentioned a number of Vietnamese TMs for ethnic minority students such as: Direct method and Interpreting method with the advantages and limitations of these TMs. According to the authors of this textbook, direct method is a second language TM that is not based on MT and its characteristics. Vietnamese is also directly received by the students by absorbing words and sentence patterns that are not related to their MT [3, p. 208 - 209]. TM is the way teachers and students work together to achieve the purpose of teaching [4, p. 39]. The reality at Tan Trao University showed that the combined use of TMs to guide Laotian students to practice Vietnamese as a second language will be more appropriate and more effective.

With the publication of the results of Contrastive analysis of the Vietnamese and Lenh Hmong tones in 2005, it was proved that: The tonal system of Lenh Hmong is morphologically a contoured, registered and voice quality one [5, p. 199]. After that, we published the results of a contrastive analysis of the Vietnamese and Hmong syllables in 2006. The results of our study showed that Vietnamese syllables have similarities and differences from Hmong syllables. While the Vietnamese syllable has prevocalic sound /-u-/ and the Hmong syllable does not have this component. Although both languages have the same type of open, half-open, half-closed syllables, Hmong language does not have a closed syllable like Vietnamese language [6, p. 255].

Also related to Vietnamese language TMs for learners of Vietnamese language as a foreign language, we have published research results on Some solutions to correct Vietnamese language pronouncing mistakes made by Mong ethnic students. To correct these mistakes, we need to analyse the causes of interference and use the phonetic characteristics of Vietnamese language to correct the mistakes for Hmong ethnic pupils, On the Journal of Educational Science Ministry of Education and Training 10/2013. In which, we have affirmed that: To correct the pronunciation errors of Vietnamese rhymes for Hmong ethnic students, it is necessary to pay attention to the similarities and differences in phonetics between Vietnamese language and Hmong language, analyze the interference between these two languages and use TMs of Vietnamese phonetics suitable for the Hmong ethnic students [7, p. 82].

On the Journal of Educational Science Ministry of Education and Training 10/2014), we have published the results of our study on some solutions overcome the mistake in spelling begining consonant of Mong language made by students of Lao Cai Teacher Training College. In which, we have shown that: The application of this research result is also very necessary to contribute to improving the quality of language education, building curriculum and compiling bilingual textbooks of Vietnamese - Hmong or Hmong - Vietnamese [8, p. 51].

Also related to understanding the characteristics of the native language of learners to teach Vietnamese as a second language, our research results published in 2016 have shown that Linguistic features of Mong in Viet Nam in the common development trend of some languages of the same type in Southeast Asia. In which, we have clearly stated: Hmong language in Vietnam has characteristics that show the general development trend of several languages of the same type in Southeast Asia [9, p. 452].

Regarding the problem of correcting Vietnamese pronunciation errors for learners of Vietnamese language as a second language, we published a monograph on Contrastive analysis of the Vietnamese - Mong phonetics - phonemics system to propose solutions to correct Vietnamese pronunciation errors for the Mong ethnic minorities students in 2016. This research results showed that: Vietnamese language teachers also need to pay attention to interference phenomena that affect Vietnamese pronunciation [10. p. 268] of learners of Vietnamese language as a second language.

Therefore, in the article “Contrastive Analysis between Vietnamese Half-Open Rhymes with Lao Half-Open Ones” (2020), our the research results have shown that: “This research not only contributes to clarifying some theoretical issues with Eastern languages but also has practical implications in language education, compilation of bilingual Vietnamese - Laotian or Laotian - Vietnamese textbooks to help Lao people learn Vietnamese well and vice versa” [11, p. 51].

Also related to understanding the characteristics of learners' mother tongue to teach Vietnamese as a second language, our research results on “Research on the type, formation and meanings of modern Lao reduplicative words” (2021) affirmed that: “This

research has practical significance in language education to help Lao people learn Vietnamese well and vice versa in the current period” [12. p. 6270].

In to the history of this issue, it can be seen that research on the combined use of teaching methods to teach Vietnamese for specific purposes to Laotian students so far still has a certain gap. Accordingly, in this report, we present research results on the combined use of teaching methods to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students. This is a research to contribute to improving the quality of Vietnamese language teaching and learning for Laotian students and vice versa.

The method used in this research is qualitative analysis, synthesis, inductive methods and explanatory research. The analysis process was carried out by using comparative and dialectical materialism methods.

2. Content

1. Combined use of communication methods to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

Because the main function of language is communication, in traditional Vietnamese language TMs, communication method is a very important method. Communication method is a language TM that focuses on building the ability to communicate in different situations and for different purposes. With this method, Laotian students are placed in specific communication situations and use Vietnamese language appropriate to that situation. It means that they not only know how to make correct sentences, but also know when, where, and for whom to use them; completely use Vietnamese in the communication process without using their MT.

In the process of teaching Laotian students to study Specialized Vietnamese, communication methods are used in both the listening, speaking and reading and writing stages. These are communication situations such as: Expanding vocabulary, using and practice of Specialized Vietnamese. When using communication method, VTs are responsible for designing different communication situations and communication purposes. The use of this method, therefore, depends on quite a lot on the ability to design communication situations of VTs, on the Vietnamese language ability of Laotian students and the specific conditions of the learning environment. Especially, when their Vietnamese is still too limited, the use of communication methods will still face certain limitations.

2. Combined use of direct methods to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

For Laotian students, the application of direct method to teaching Specialized Vietnamese as a second language has the advantage of helping learners to directly approach Vietnamese language, reducing the negative influence caused by interference with their MT. Thus, direct method is the method of teaching a second language without using the MT in order to shorten the time to learn Vietnamese language. In the process of using this method, Laotian students learn a language by listening over and over again. And then, they speak, read and write. Similar to Total Physical Response method, direct method is also based on natural language development.

Direct method is often used in conjunction with Total Physical Response method to help Laotian students understand the meaning of terms of Specialized Vietnamese. Learning activities help students transition naturally from listening comprehension to speaking. In the listening comprehension phase of a second language, Laotian students demonstrate their understanding through actions or simple answers.

Direct method requires the following key pedagogical requirements:

When encountering sentences and paragraphs with difficult scientific terms, VTs need to use Vietnamese to explain; use a lot of visual teaching aids, organize practical activities using pictures, photos, models, etc.

VTs teach through a system of exercises to teach how to expand vocabulary, use and practice Specialized Vietnamese. There should be no rules to explain Vietnamese grammar phenomena, but only when Laotian students are more proficient in the language, VTs will give simple reminders about grammatical phenomena and the use of some specialized scientific terms.

VTs need to conduct conversations with Laotian students or a short story in everyday speech to start a Specialized Vietnamese lesson in direct method.

VTs need to accept the approximation and errors in using Specialized Vietnamese of Laotian students and consider it as a natural part of language learning to find ways to overcome.

The Vietnamese language ability of the Laotian students determines quite a lot to the extent of using the direct method of VTs.

3. Combined use of interpreting method (mother tongue use method) to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

Interpreting method (mother tongue use method) is the method that the teacher uses the MT of the learners to help the learners understand the lesson. This method is used in combination in cases where the VTs have used the direct method in Vietnamese but the Laotian students still do not understand the meaning. Unlike direct method, interpreting method pays great attention to the use of MT. All words and sentences are related and compared with MT. All readings and language documents are also translated into the learners' MT. The new grammatical phenomena are compared with equivalent grammatical phenomena in the MT to show the similarities and differences between them. VTs prevent mistakes that students may make due to their habit of using MT. For example: When practicing explaining the meaning of a scientific term and of a sentence containing that term, the VTs should coordinate with the use of interpreting method provided that the VTs know the Laotian students' MT. Specifically: VTs find words in the MT of Laotian students or look up a dictionary of terms with equivalent meanings to difficult terms in the lesson; use MT of learners to interpret the content of some abstract terms and concepts; summarize the content of a Vietnamese paragraph or a text; using MT of Laotian students as a teaching language in a part of Specialized Vietnamese lesson.

VTs use MT of Laotian students to explain the meaning of words, sentences, and texts of Specialized Vietnamese:

When teaching to make sentences and Specialized Vietnamese words, VTs should review important Vietnamese words/sentences in the lesson: terms and words with abstract meanings to find equivalent words and sentences in Laotian student's MT. If there are no words with corresponding meanings, the VTs will use the students' MT to explain the meanings of those terms and words.

When teaching reading - comprehension of scientific texts with Specialized Vietnamese words, the VTs use Laotian students' MT to explain the content of that scientific text: In documents with scientific content, there are often difficult terms. When encountering these cases, VTs use MT to explain and analyze for Laotian students to understand the meaning of those terms.

After that, VTs use MT to close the lesson, in order to help Laotian students to understand the content they have just learned:

VTs use Laotian students' MT to ask some questions to check the comprehension of the lesson of Laotian students. On that basis, consolidate, deepen or finalize the basic content of the lesson. This activity helps VTs grasp the comprehension level of Laotian students. Especially in teaching activities, VTs use Vietnamese as the teaching language, so depending on the requirements and content of each specific lesson; the VTs adjust the level of Vietnamese language usage and MT of Laotian students to be suitable. In teaching Specialized Vietnamese, the goal of using MT is to help Laotian students learn Vietnamese better. Therefore, it is necessary to choose the right case, time and duration of using MT to suit each content and learning period of Laotian students, avoiding abuse of MT in the teaching process.

In addition, MT method also needs to be coordinated with other bilingual TMs in each activity to familiarize yourself with Vietnamese or Specialized Vietnamese lesson. That is, for each lesson or activity, VTs can use a combination of many traditional TMs with second language TMs. The classification into each method as described above is to help VTs understand the essence of each method, but it does not mean that for teaching each Specialized Vietnamese lesson, only one method is used. In particular, Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a method used very effectively for second language learners at the new stage of learning a foreign language.

However, teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students is a difficult job and requires a lot of time. As a result, teaching methods and means need to be applied flexibly to suit the content of the lesson and the ability to acquire Specialized Vietnamese of Laotian students.

4. Combined use of Total Physical Response (TPR) method to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

Total Physical Response (TPR) method is a method of learning through action. It means that: listening to something, then practice it through body actions. This method was introduced by Dr. James J. Asher of the University of Cambridge (UK) in the 1960s, widely and effectively applied in many countries around the world. TPR method is a new language TM through action (listening, observing and doing by body action). This method is very effective for people who are just starting to learn a new language (except MT), allowing learners to acquire a new language easily and naturally without being forced to concentrate or put too much stress on it [1, p.17].

Regarding the implementation process, TPR method requires learners to focus on listening and responding with body actions. With this method, learners will listen to voice commands (instructions) in new languages, and at the same time, observe others respond to voice commands heard and observed actions.

There are four basic types of TPR used to learn a new language: TPR with the body: learning language through working with basic body movements; TPR with objects: learning language through body action with objects; TPR with pictures: learn language through activities with pictures (built-in pictures, draw pictures, move to pictures); TPR with stories: learn languages through activities with the content of stories [1, p. 19-22].

To apply TPR method in the process of teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students, VTs need to perform 3 basic steps as follows:

Step 1: VTs make models: VTs speak new term; use a sample voice command with those new words and make model actions (3 times).

Step 2: VTs together with learners make models: The teacher invites 2-3 Laotian students to make models together with the teacher (3 times). Then, VTs will practice with Laotian students: VTs invite a group or two Laotian students: VTs speak a Specialized Vietnamese word, Laotian students listen and repeat that word (3 times).

Then, Laotian students speak and perform the action at the same time (each pair or group of Laotian students perform the action according to the meaning of the new word and said it 3 times), so that all Laotian students in the classroom can practice together. After that, Laotian students practice by themselves in groups or individually: each student, in turn, says new words and acts according to the model (3 times each group) so that all learners can participate in the practice.

Step 3: VTs together with Laotian students review the content they have just learned through the form of games (putting Specialized Vietnamese words into communication situations). Voice commands at this step can be swapped out for new words to be different from the sample voice commands; combine review of Specialized Vietnamese words that Laotian students have learned.

The number of new words and sentence patterns of Specialized Vietnamese in each lesson should match the receptive ability of Laotian students and the difficulty of each lesson and each new word. Based on the results of the review in each lesson, VT who directly teaches will be the one who understands how many words to choose, how many new Specialized Vietnamese sentences are suitable for the receptive ability of Laotian students.

TPR method is applied to teach Laotian students when starting to study Specialized Vietnamese to help learners achieve their learning goals:

Help Laotian students to learn vocabulary of Specialized Vietnamese like how a child learns his own MT. Thereby, learners can actively use the senses and movements of the body during the process of participating in new language learning and practice activities. Listening - observing - responding skills (by body actions) are effectively used in the learning process. The actions of the body moving to the school supplies corresponding to the meaning that the Specialized Vietnamese words express will help Laotian students to understand and remember for a long time easily and naturally without forcing to be too focused on it.

Form and train listening and speaking skills of Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students.

Understand and use Specialized Vietnamese in communication and specialized study in the next academic years.

Build confidence, become proficient in using Specialized Vietnamese and maintain interest in learning.

Help VTs and Laotian students can flexibly and creatively apply teaching and learning activities to achieve really active Specialized Vietnamese lessons.

The three main activities of TPR method that VTs need to perform to teach Specialized Vietnamese for specific purposes to Laotian students are: VTs will guide Laotian students to listen, see and act; VTs describe the actions (model) before Laotian students perform again according to the sample; VTs implement rule number 3: 3 instructions of VTs are modeled 3 times before Laotian students follow the model.

In the process of learning Specialized Vietnamese, Laotian students often make mistakes due to the influence of MT's habits. Example: Pronunciation error, word usage error, sentence structure error.... Therefore, teaching skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students must be done very specifically, persistently and repeated often. On the other hand, due to the language barrier, the psychology of Laotian students when they come to Vietnamese classes is still afraid, not bold, not confident to participate in learning activities, so it also affects the process of perceiving a new language for them. For this reason, when organizing teaching activities

of Specialized Vietnamese, VTs must study carefully to flexibly use teaching methods to suit learners' abilities to help Laotian students to learn Specialized Vietnamese well.

The organization of teaching Specialized Vietnamese with TPR method will help Laotian students to listen, see and observe the simulated actions of VTs about the knowledge and language skills learned in the lesson. Laotian students themselves are also simulated by actions, manipulations combined with words repeated many times. Thereby, students will understand the content of the lesson accurately, completely and surely. Thus, the class of Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students will no longer be heavy, but become more attractive and lively. The students also participate in learning activities an exciting, bold, confident and positive way and feel more favorable in learning the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing Specialized Vietnamese.

In addition to the advantages as described, the use of TPR method to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students also has certain limitations that VTs need to pay attention to as follows:

VTs are too focused on teaching new Specialized Vietnamese words, not actively balancing the provision of new words with the practice of using new words. To overcome this limitation, VTs need to prepare the sentence structure that will be used with new words in the lesson.

VTs only use some monotonous Specialized Vietnamese words, phrases, and sentences that are repeated many times in many lessons. To overcome this limitation, VTs should list out many options for using Specialized Vietnamese words and phrases in the lesson; choose the most appropriate and creative use.

VTs do not use and regularly review previously learned Specialized Vietnamese words. To overcome this limitation, VTs need to systematize and re-list the learned Specialized Vietnamese words; incorporate learned words into new lessons.

VTs talk too quickly and interpret and lead too much; use many Specialized Vietnamese words that Laotian students do not understand. To overcome this limitation, VTs need to plan to use language in each lesson; cut out the procedures for interpreting, leading, instead use gestures and illustrations if necessary.

VTs prepare too many utensils. To overcome this limitation, VTs need instead of 1 tool for each student, if possible, let Laotian students work in groups to minimize the number of utensils. At the same time, strengthen the interaction between teachers and learners.

Sometimes, VTs have not paid attention to some habits of Laotian students, such as only reading according to the teacher's sample without paying attention to the content and meaning of the Specialized Vietnamese word they are saying. To overcome this limitation, VTs need enhanced class coverage; check the student's correct comprehension by swapping the order of the required content; give test questions; practice for Laotian students the habit of speaking as normal communication; create communication spaces in pairs and groups; avoid reading aloud, reading without understanding the meaning.

VTs have not yet paid attention to the placement to hang and place objects, leading to reducing the students' observation ability. To overcome this limitation, VTs need to sit down so that Laotian students have a good view, and the whole group of Laotian students can clearly observe teaching aids.

In particular, because scientific terms and Specialized Vietnamese words often have abstract and difficult to understand meanings, the interpreting method (MT method) and TPR method with objects and with images may be preferred to use more coordination.

5. Combined use of linguistic analysis method to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

Linguistic analysis method is the one used systematically in considering all aspects of language: phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, word structure, spelling, style with the aim of clarifying the structure of the types of language units, their form and structure, and their meaning in speech [1, p. 84].

In the process of teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students, VTs need to use a combination of linguistic analysis methods. All forms of linguistic analysis are part of various exercises such as: Exercises to practice reading, writing, dictation, practice words and sentences, practice speaking, writing paragraphs and writing texts in Specialized Vietnamese with analytical tasks.

6. Combined use of modelling method to teach Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students

Modelling practice method is a method in which learners create language units and speech by simulating teacher's words and textbooks [1, p. 84-85].

Throughout the duration of teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students, VTs need to coordinate with the use of modelling practice method when guiding them to make Specialized Vietnamese sentences according to given patterns, and pronouncing or reading by the teacher's instructions. It is also necessary to use this combination of TMs during the practice lessons of reading, dictation, vocabulary and structure practice, writing practice of Specialized Vietnamese.

In order to using a good combination of modelling practice method with other TMs, VTs need to firmly grasp the model - specific teaching goals; having ability to create samples of Specialized Vietnamese by demonstration (know to model); firmly grasp points of deviation to Laotian students compared with samples of Specialized Vietnamese. VTs there are creative ways to use the combination of TMs to convert misleading and incorrect speech of Laotian students into the correct Specialized Vietnamese patterns.

3. Conclusion and Discussion

It is currently extremely important and urgent to improve quality of teaching Vietnamese language to Laotian students. Because Laotian students learn Vietnamese as a foreign language, in the process of learning Specialized Vietnamese, they often make mistakes due to the influence of MT's habit such as errors of pronunciation, words, and sentences, as well as errors of writing paragraphs and writing texts in Specialized Vietnamese. Consequently, teaching skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students should have been specific, persistent and regular. The language barrier has a great influence on processing of receiving Specialized Vietnamese among Laotian students. Thus, during the process of teaching Specialized Vietnamese for Laotian students, VTs need to use a combination of TMs such as: communication method, direct method, interpreting method (mother tongue use method), Total Physical Response (TPR) method, linguistic analysis method, modelling practice method. While there are many advantages, the combination of TMs as described above also has certain limitations such as: VTs easily fall into situation that they only focus on teaching in a mechanical, rigid way, even little paying attention to the learners' understanding of Specialized Vietnamese word meaning. Hence, VTs need to foster, practice and draw experience regularly after each time applying the combination of TMs. Dividing of each TM to explain better each method, but in practice, these above methods need to be used in a flexible, creative and appropriate coordination way to help Laotian

students learn Specialized Vietnamese language effectively. In particular, by reason of scientific terms and Specialized Vietnamese words often have abstract meaning and difficult to understand, interpreting method (MT method) and TPR method with objects, TPR method with images can be preferred to use combination. Depending on teaching conditions as well as tasks and teaching contents and the cognitive capacity of Laotian students, VTs need to choose method and level of using TMs flexibly, creatively and suitably to get highly efficient. Then, they can help Laotian students be more convenient in practicing skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing Specialized Vietnamese; using Specialized Vietnamese in learning and communication better.

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