Measures to improve the quality of group discussion activities in online English classes for non-major students at Hai Phong University

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Abstract: Group discussion activities during class time are regular activities to enhance interaction in order to develop common qualities, competencies and in-depth competencies for students. During the process of English teaching for non- major students of Hai Phong University, group discussion activities are one of the typical activities. In the context of general classes, the teaching English for non-major students has been converted from face-to-face to online learning, which partly affects the effectiveness of group activities. This article focuses on studying the issues of group discussion, online teaching process and online teaching tools in teaching and learning the English. The article proposes some measures to improve the quality of group discussions in online English lectures for non-major students of Hai Phong University.

Keywords: Group discussion activities; online teaching and learning.

I. Introduction

At Hai Phong University, the organization of online educational activities has been implemented. Teachers and students have been instructed on some basic online teaching tools. They are proficient in using online learning tools. However, when organizing online classes, lecturers (teachers) and students are sometimes confused in organizing group discussion activities such as: group management is ineffective; student interaction in groups is still very limited. There are not measures to address or minimize the above limitations. Especially in the English class for non-major students.

This article focuses on researching issues of group discussion in online teaching, online teaching tools and the current situation of online teaching and learning of English for non-major students of Hai Phong University to propose some measures to improve the quality of online group discussion activities.

2.Content:

2.1. General issues about group discussion activities in online teaching

2.1.1. Online teaching

Recently, online teaching has gradually become a popular form of teaching and learning at most educational levels. However, there are no specific statistics on the definition of this type of teaching.

There are many names for this type of learning such as: Distance education, online teaching (online class) or e-learning. According to Holomberg (1986) distance education is a term that describes organized learning and teachers do not operate directly at a specific location or time; This form requires special technologies to design lessons, instructional techniques, and special communication and administration tools. Similarly, Perraton (1988) emphasizes the flexibility of online learning as an educational process that includes teaching and learning activities carried out by single individuals without any face-to-face meetings. communication between teachers and students.

2.1.2.Group Discussion

Group Discussion is a type of discussion that involves people sharing ideas or activities. People in the group discussion are connected with one basic idea. Based on that idea, everyone in the group represents his/her perspective. Group Discussion is a discussion that tests the candidate's skills, such as leadership skills, communication skills, social skills and behavior, politeness, teamwork, listening ability, general awareness, confidence, problem-solving skills, etc.

Previously, the method of teaching English was to teach knowledge and the teacher was the center. However, with the requirements for

innovation in English teaching methods according to the development of learners' qualities and abilities, group work or cooperative learning is one of the important activities. Group discussion is an instructional approach in which students work together in a small group or group to complete a common task (Rezaei, 2017).

Group work is beneficial for both students and teachers. First, group discussion motivates students, provides opportunities for guidance and peer review, gives students the opportunity to look at problems from many perspectives and helps students become more creative. Second, group discussion is an opportunity for teachers to assign more complex and more realistic tasks to students.

Elements of group work activities include:

Group size is a factor that affects the effectiveness of group activities. Large, multi-member groups will provide many sources of contributions to complete the task. However, each member of a large group will contribute less on average than a small group, Liden, Wayne, Jaworski & Bennett, (2004). Besides, large groups often find it difficult to maintain the attention and cooperation of members, according to Cummings Kiesler, Bosaghzadeh & Balakrishnan (2013).

Peer assessment occurs when instructors allow students to evaluate each other's contributions to group activities. This brings two benefits to students. Evaluating the work of group members helps students evaluate their own work; and students who are evaluated will be more willing to receive peer evaluation than instructor evaluation when the instructor does not fully observe the group process (according to Jong, Lai, Hsia & Lin, 2013).

2.1.3. Online teaching tools

Online teaching tools are apps or websites that empower educators, facilitate student communication, or help achieve learning objectives. Teachers and students can now access a huge variety of online teaching tools that enhance the teaching and learning experience. As such, these tools play an increasingly important role in modern education. For instance, if you find it challenging to create presentations that engage your remote class sessions, you might benefit from using a digital whiteboard. Or, if your students struggle to focus on specific topics, you might incorporate fun activities, such as games or interactive activities, to increase their engagement levels.

To implement online teaching, teachers need teaching tools and assessment tools. There are many free tools like Microsoft teams, google meet, Zoom, padlet, nearpod, quizziz. In this article, I chose two basic software: Google Meet to teach lessons because of the friendliness of the software; padlet to collect student learning products. Microsoft excel to record and track students' progress during the learning process.

2.2. Current status of group discussion activities in online English classes for non-major students at Hai Phong University

In the current context of strong technology development, Hai Phong University has applied online teaching methods to teach most subjects. Through observation and organization of online English lessons for non-major students at Hai Phong Univesity, it can be seen that most teachers teach through Powerpoint for students to practice. Testing and evaluation activities during lesson are only performed on a small number of students. When implementing online teaching, most teachers encounter difficulties when implementing group teaching techniques. Firstly, there is a group activity for students to discuss through Google Meet because it does not support the breakout room feature. Second, it is difficult for teachers to observe students' practice activities, thereby making it difficult to conduct regular testing and assessment. Third, classroom management is challenging because students are often disorderly or do their own work. This phenomenon affects the teaching and learning activities of the whole class.

2.3. Measures to improve the quality of group discussion activities in online English classes for non-major students at Hai Phong University

2.3.1. Classroom management

Good classroom management will improve the effectiveness of online teaching and learning activities. Teachers and students need to develop classroom rules through classroom contracts as a way to agree on rules with students. Before starting the online course, teachers need to discuss and agree with students on what they will do during online lessons. Teachers pose problems, students contribute solutions and vote for solutions. Teachers and students draft a table of rules or a classroom contract. Both teachers and students sign the contract. You can build online classroom rules according to the

suggestions below:

Always turn on the camera in the classroom; Only open the mic, or speak up when the teacher requests to avoid noise. Type in the chat box 'go out, plz' when you want to go out; Type the x symbol in the chat box when you want to express your opinion.

Class contract:

Student/Teacher Contract Form:

Class: …………

The student agrees to:

- Be on time, with the necessary books and equipment's.
- Pay attention
- Show respect to others
- Use English all time
- Follow all instructions
- If in doubt, ask
- Try to complete all work

If I break any of these terms, I'll be subject to any suitable consequences and punishment agreed between students and the teacher

Student's signature:

Teacher: Miss/Mr…. Signature

Date:…………….

Through the process of implementing this measure, students are less disorderly, know how to wait when it is their turn to speak, respect other students in the class, and proactively use speech features to contribute. individual's point of view.

2.3.2. Solution for implementing group activities in online classes

During the teaching process, teachers should use Google Meet to organize online lessons. The teacher groups students with a number of 4 people per group. The group members need to be fixed because of certain limitations that the teacher cannot divide groups flexibly like a traditional classroom. One student will be the group leader to create a group Google meet. Group leaders must be students using desktop or laptop computers.

The teacher guides the group leaders to open their group's Google meet room. The google meet link of the class and of the study groups will be collected by the teacher and made public to the whole class so that students can access it at any time to observe lessons, check their group's learning activities, evaluate their level and advise students during group discussions. On the tab in the general meeting group, teachers can set a countdown timer so that students receive the signal that group work time is up and promptly return to the meeting room.

The teacher will check group discussion products by randomly asking a few members of the groups. Students in other groups listen and give comments.

By dividing and operating online study groups like this, we can see students' progress in both using Google Meet, entering and exiting common meeting rooms and group meeting rooms quickly and fluently.

To implement the group discussion process during regular classes, teachers need to be prepared for practical operations, allocate discussion groups appropriately in terms of size, clear group division and regulations. responsibilities of group members.

When solving classroom-related problems and managing group discussion activities during online classes, teachers need to agree on rules with students. These rules are publicly announced for teachers and students to comply with.

In order for group discussion activities to operate during online English classes, not only does it require the support of teachers and students, but it also requires support from the subject team, faculty and school staff.

3.Conclusion

By combining the results from the research method, it can be concluded that the implementation of group discussion activities in online teaching of English for non-major students at Hai Phong Unnversity still faces many barriers in terms of technology and implementation process. Research also shows that group discussion activities in online learning also have the same problems as online classes. Building classroom rules requires consensus between teachers and students, grouping and managing study groups by creating separate meeting rooms for each group with supervision from teachers so that groups can discuss without affecting each other. The common meeting room is an effective solution to improve the quality of group disscusion activities during class hours of online English lessons for non-major students at Hai Phong Unnversity.

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