

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UTILIZING TEXTBOOKS “LIFE” AND “SPEAKOUT” IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT UNETI IN IR 4.0

## HIỆU QUẢ CỦA VIỆC SỬ DỤNG GIÁO TRÌNH “LIFE” VÀ “SPEAKOUT” TRONG GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ TẠI UNETI TRONG THỜI ĐẠI 4.0

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**Abstract:** Digital technology has put much influence on curriculum design and lesson planning, especially for language classes. This study shed a light on the background of Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 in relation with designing curriculum and selecting appropriate teaching materials in higher education in Vietnam. Significantly, this is a descriptive research which was utilized either quantitative or qualitative methodology. It drew on database provided by questionnaire and observation checklist to investigate the effectiveness of using of LIFE and SPEAKOUT as the main textbooks at University of Economics - Technology for Industries (UNETI). The results indicated that those textbooks do an acceptable work in supplying fun, exciting and goal-oriented activities for students. Students were encouraged to get engaged, negotiate meaning, self-invest in their learning and produce language in communicative contexts to achieve an outcome. The findings also showed that the authentic content from LIFE and SPEAKOUT is motivating and confidence-boosting for learners. Moreover, this study highlights that the implementation of those reliable teaching documents should be obtained for learners to fully benefit.

**Keywords:** Curriculum design, teaching material, LIFE, SPEAKOUT, IR 4.0.

**Tóm tắt:** Công nghệ kỹ thuật số có ảnh hưởng tới thiết kế chương trình, lập kế hoạch giảng dạy; đặc biệt trong lớp học ngôn ngữ. Nghiên cứu làm sáng tỏ mối quan hệ của cách mạng công nghiệp 4.0 với thiết kế chương trình và lựa chọn giáo trình trong giáo dục đại học Việt Nam. Nghiên cứu mô tả này sử dụng phương pháp định lượng và định tính. Công cụ khảo sát và phiếu kiểm tra quan sát giúp thu thập dữ liệu về hiệu quả trong sử dụng giáo trình “LIFE” và “SPEAKOUT” tại UNETI. Kết quả cho thấy người học được cung cấp những hoạt động định hướng mục tiêu thú vị; được khuyến khích tham gia các hoạt động tương tác, đàm phán và tự tìm tòi nhằm chủ động sử dụng ngôn ngữ trong các bối cảnh giao tiếp; đồng thời chỉ ra nội dung giáo trình mang tính xác thực cao, nhằm thúc đẩy và tăng cường sự tự tin cho người học. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh việc sử dụng các giáo trình đáng tin cậy này cần được khai thác thêm để đem lại nhiều lợi ích hơn cho người học.

**Từ khóa:** Thiết kế chương trình, giáo trình giảng dạy, LIFE, SPEAKOUT, Cách mạng công nghệ 4.0.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. What is Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0?

Readers are enviably entitled with an example provided by Fisk (2017) to understand how the industrial revolutions have changed across the

time. Firstly, workers used water and steam to mechanize production during the IR 1.0. Secondly, during the IR 2.0, with the use of electric power, mass production was created. The next period was known with the IR3.0 in which electronics and information

technology were utilized to automate production. Then, currently is the 4<sup>th</sup> IR which strengthens the connection among the physical, digital and biological worlds with the assistance of the new technologies. Diwan (2017) advocates that those advancements are directed by the outgrowth of artificial intelligent, robotics, the internet of things, autonomous vehicles, bio and nanotechnology, 3-D printing, material science, quantum computing and energy storage. Due to that fact, every life aspect including business, governance and education are impacted by the IR 4.0.

### **1.2. Various trends in education related to IR 4.0**

There are nine trends related to IR 4.0 in education (Fisk, 2017).

Firstly, learning can be taken place anytime anywhere with the implementation of e-learning tools and flipped classroom approach.

Secondly, each individual with different learning habit and style should be assigned appropriate tasks or assignments. Hence, it is said to enhance positive learning experience and motivate learners to focus on their own academic abilities.

Thirdly, students are able to determine how they want to learn, to select the learning tools or techniques that they prefer.

Fourthly, theory lessons can be researched by students at home, meanwhile more project-based learning should be assigned for the students to apply their knowledge and skills such as organizing, collaborating and time managing to complete a series of projects during a school-term.

Fifthly, the more project students are exposed, the more skillful they can be during the process of team work and face-to-face communication.

Sixthly, the stages of applying students' theoretical background help them to make inferences based on logic and trends from data interpretation.

Seventhly, the learning outcomes will be assessed differently and accurately when students are working on their projects in the field.

Eighthly, the significant aspect in designing and updating the curriculum is truthfully students' opinions and ideas. Their inputs help pedagogical developers maintain curriculum contemporariness, up-to-date and usefulness.

Lastly, students will become more independent in their own learning, thus forcing teachers to assume a new role as facilitators who will guide the students through their learning process.

The nine trends of IR 4.0 shift the major learning responsibilities from the instructors to the learners. Instructors should play their roles to support the transition and should never consider it as a threat to the conventional teaching profession.

### **1.3. Impacts of IR 4.0 on the field of higher education in Vietnam**

IR 4.0 is evaluated to have a strong impact on all aspects of life, economy and society, not just at the scale of factories and enterprises. For higher education, IR. 4.0 has the following predictable impacts firstly on the labor market with low-paid and high-paid groups of incomes and the deciding opponent is on how much knowledge and skill they own; secondly, so as to be equipped with essential background, learners need to utilize mobile connectivity and cloud computing application through online courses, meetings or conferences, Diwan, (2017) also predicts how an average classroom will look like in the next 5 to 7 years.

- A huge change in the layout of the classroom.
- Virtual and augmented reality will change the educational landscape.
- Flexible assignments will accommodate multiple learning styles.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Curriculum Design and Development of Materials for Second Language Teaching

The English as Foreign/ Second Language (EFL/ ESL) textbooks play a vital role in providing teaching content and instructional direction for the learning and teaching process. Almost teachers utilize non-traditional text as the main source to deliver either the content or the learning activities in the classroom (Sadler, 1998). As Graves (1996) indicates, the textbooks appear as unquestionable resources for learning a foreign language and central in defining course of action and content.

EFL/ESL textbooks not only allow us to identify teaching and learning processes, but they are also potentially useful for providing a site for study of the theory-in-use of an English Language Teaching (ELT) community (Sadler, 1998). When researchers work on textbooks, they are able to examine the inherent contents driven by textbook designers. Besides, the textbooks can indicate the writer's perceptions and choices related to methodology, course design and instruction and how these are vocalized to promote students' knowledge about EFL efficaciously.

### 2.2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Curriculum Design

Monitoring and assessing progress is a type of measurement teachers take to evaluate student's learning. This key aspect cannot be omitted in the curriculum. The reason is that it helps the teachers and students understand to

what extent goals and objectives have been met and what still needs to be reinforced. As Sadler (1998) underlines, "Formative assessment refers to assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning" (p. 77). In addition, formative and summative assessment for a specific lesson must be analyzed and displayed by the curriculum designers. In details, evaluation criteria should be supplied for short-term achievement tests in accordance with other types of testing and assessment. It is undeniable that it takes much time and effort to design a language course due to a variety of components and conceptualizations. The components of curriculum design proposed by Graves (1996) to a great extent contribute to the development of suitable language learning materials.

### 2.3. Teaching Materials

#### 2.3.1. Definition

Related to the subject of the study, it is essential to clarify some related conceptions: "textbook", "course book", and "materials".

Wikipedia, one of the most common encyclopedia in the world, defines "textbook" as a standard source of information constituting of study content for education institutions.

Materials mean anything which is used for teaching and learning process, for example, a text book, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard or anything which presents or informs about the language being learned (Tomlinson, 2001).

#### 2.3.2. Types of Teaching Materials

According to Tomlinson (2001), there are different types of materials designed in different forms for different purposes and based on different criteria such as printed

materials, non-printed materials and ones that comprise both print and non-print sources.

Graves (1996) points out that textbooks are classified into two kinds: traditional textbooks and communicative textbooks.

Traditional textbooks focus on the forms, the syllabus and examination, highlight the significance of reading and writing activities, not the communicative functions of language. Meanwhile, communicative textbooks are designed to focalize on oral communication, demonstrate the authentic language of the outside world and light up the importance of pair and group works.

Due to the need of using foreign language as a medium of communication in social life, communicative textbooks are considered premium choice.

### **2.3.3. Roles of Materials in Language Teaching and Learning**

Tomlinson (2001) mentions the necessary knowledge in textbooks is supplied for classroom lessons under the theme of different activities, various tasks like reading or explanations.

Riasati and Zare (2010) state that textbooks play a very significant role in the realm of language teaching and learning and are regarded the next crucial factor in EFL classroom after the teacher.

Fisk (2017) also declares that textbooks is a key component in most language programs and they provide the learners with “the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice the students take part in”.

Richard (2001) also shows that there are no differences of textbooks’ roles between learning and teaching.

In a nutshell, it is undeniable the importance

of teaching materials. Therefore, it is substantive to design or select a good teaching material for a course.

## **2.4. LIFE and SPEAKOUT**

### **2.4.1. What is LIFE and SPEAKOUT?**

National Geographic enriches the content with LIFE to raise a numerous crucial benefits by inspiring users to think about the planet, praising human accomplishment and investigating diversity. Accordance with that fact, a series of LIFE are also designed in line with ELT settings to outperform desires.

SPEAKOUT driven by Pearson incorporates BBC video content to simplify the teaching and learning process. This course is for grown-ups and youthful grown-ups. In SPEAKOUT, it is approachable to themes, language development and skills works. Communicative tasks are prominent systematically with the other three language skills.

### **2.4.2. LIFE and SPEAKOUT in line with IR 4.0**

#### ***Combine teaching and learning with practice***

**LIFE:** Systems and layouts are provided to students to work insides so as to utilize the language more inventively. Instructional activities encourage learners to integrate the practice and theory in the classroom. Critical thinking is a must for learners when dealing with LIFE to explore their attitudes and values.

**SPEAKOUT:** The syllabus is emphasized on so many pronunciation features that learners can practice themselves. DVD lessons enables understudies to consolidate the languages, for examples, 90-120 hours of teaching materials, comprehensive language bank, photo bank to expand vocabulary, updated visuals and texts from BBC and other authentic materials.

***Diversify educational roadmaps***

*LIFE* is a series of books for different level of student proficiency, from lower level ability to higher level ability (A1, A1-A2, A2-B1). Moreover, it is designed to suit Vietnamese learners. Therefore, Life, Vietnam edition is distributed to the education.

*SPEAKOUT* are driven with rich content from latest photos and illustrations introduced in every unit. Besides, the video bank from the BBC including documentaries, dramas and entertainment are unique and designed logically for learners to study themselves.

***Encourage lifelong learning***

*LIFE* is designed to increase learners' higher self-esteem with workbook online on Myelt and maximize their learning retention in imparting knowledge. In addition, discovering the world of LIFE helps learners to get more fun so as to associate with unpleasant intellectual and emotional feelings.

*SPEAKOUT*: learners raise their confidence by concentrating on their experience. Moreover, learners can follow the clear objectives in every unit to emphasize on the important issues. Besides, learners are able to collaborate attentively.

***Promote teaching and learning English language, strengthen the application of information technology in learning and management***

*LIFE*: learners can use Life software known as an interactive whiteboard application for classroom. The users can cover the main content in each unit by clicking an assets button and a toolbar at the base. Audios, grammar focus and different types of exercises are also included on the screen, which is easy for learners to comprehend. Furthermore, informative worksheets, webinars and additional training exercises are introduced on not only Cengageasia but also a Natgeo Vietnam facebook page. The most important

feature is the Outcomes Examview Assessment CD\_ROM which is an incredible tool, helping learners to see and record their improvement.

*SPEAKOUT*: GSE/ CEFR mapping helps students track their progress and see the relevance of what they are learning. These books also provide learners with MyEnglishLab (MEL), Speakout Extra, Study Booster to use the resources whenever they want to develop skills. MEL content can be assigned for the whole class, groups or individuals. The use of MEL allows for blending or flipping classroom learning with synchronous and/or asynchronous learning outside of the classroom. It also has the potential to build a bridge, whereby teaching and technology support learning and inform each other.

**3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY****3.1. Teaching context at UNETI**

At UNETI, students are trained for four years with such majors as electronic - communication technology, accounting, banking and finance and so on. These majors are related to the technical means and their interrelation with human society and most documents or using guides about these fields are in English. Therefore, English becomes a compulsory subject at UNETI. A series of New Headway was used as the main textbook at here. Moreover, Linguistics is a new major which has been set at UNETI since the first semester of 2019-2020 school year. Due to the changes in IR 4.0 and specialized students' needs, it is high time that a new curriculum was considered to be more appropriate. In order to do that, teaching materials is the most crucial factor in the curriculum and syllabus.

**3.2. Participants**

85 students from DHNNA13A1, DHKT11A8 and DHQT11A1 took part in this study. The participants are observed to be at different level of English proficiency. Some students

are more confident and responsible for their own learning; meanwhile, some are so passive in EFL/ ESL classes.

#### 4. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

##### 4.1. Methodology

Because one of the main purpose of this study is to investigate the students' perspectives towards using LIFE and SPEAKOUT in class, both qualitative and quantitative methodology were employed to help researcher examine the layered thoughts of the learners by generating rich and detailed data. In addition, stronger inherence and alteration of the interaction among learners, teachers and teaching materials will be permitted.

##### 4.2. Data collection instruments

To the nature of quantitative and qualitative methodology, questionnaire and observation checklists were utilized in this research.

##### 4.3. Research procedure

This research was conducted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of school year 2018-2019 with DHKT11A8 and DHQT11A1 and in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of school year 2019-2020 with DHNNA13A2 at UNETI.

First of all, observation checklist was designed with five-point Likert scale of "Excellent, Very good, Good, Faire and Poor". In addition, an extra column was included for the checker to prove their choices by displaying evidence and give more comments on the target issues related to the lessons. Secondly, questionnaire was driven by a set of 15 close-ended questions with five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Besides, a close-ended question was emphasized to identify deeper understanding of their perceptions towards implementing language classroom with LIFE and SPEAKOUT as the main resource. Those

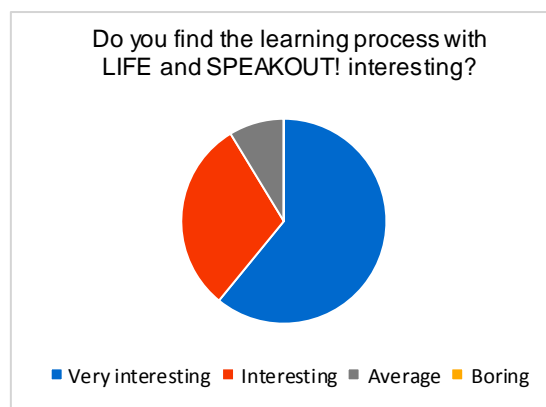
questions were expected to discover their needs about the writing textbooks.

Both observation checklist and questionnaire was written in mother tongue to avoid misunderstanding and the learners were able to express their views freely.

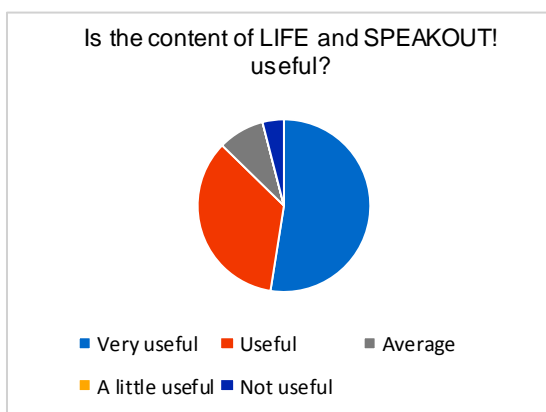
#### 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results collected from both questionnaire and observation checklist were crosschecked and triangulated to avoid ambiguity.

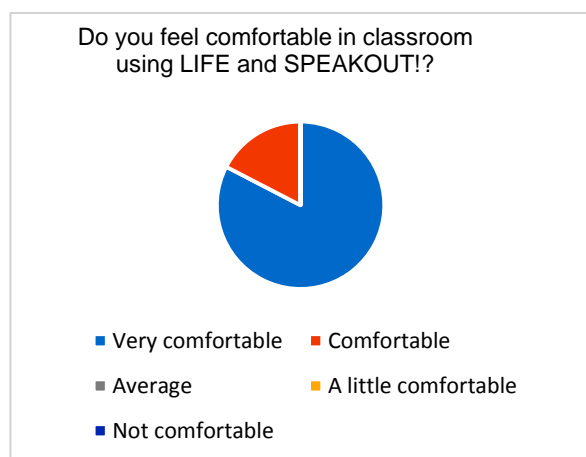
The findings analyzed from the questionnaire show that 60.9% of the students found the learning process with LIFE and SPEAKOUT! as very interesting, 30.4% found it as interesting and 8.7% found it as average.



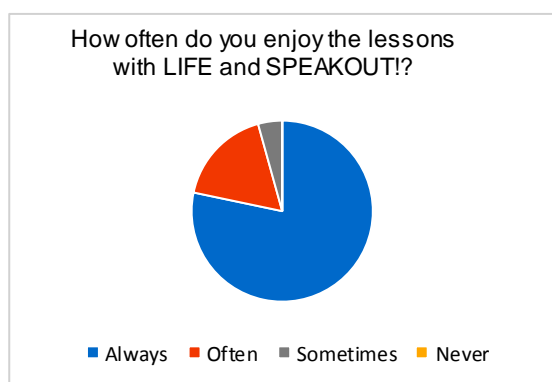
In terms of the usefulness of the content, 52.5% of the participants said those textbooks were very useful, 34.8% claimed them as useful, 8.7% considered them as average and 4% said them as not useful respectively.



Regarding participants' comfort, students also said that they are comfortable learning in the class and the found the lessons as enjoyable and they felt confident to take part actively in the learning sessions. These results of the questionnaire show that 82.6% of the students claimed that they felt very comfortable while 17.4% claimed that they felt comfortable learning in such setting. A small amount of students confirmed that those books were not useful. A possible explanation was that "some parts of the books like topics in some video sections do not match the whole content of the unit", several students reported.



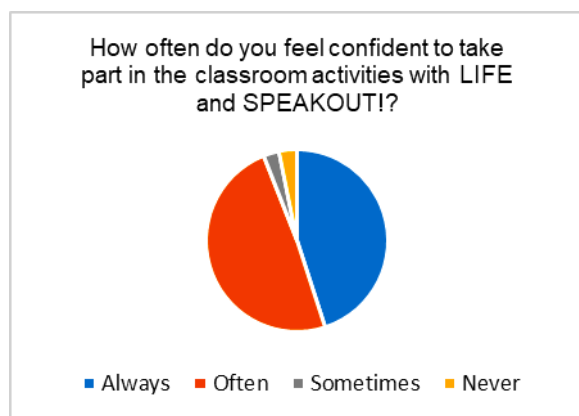
Concerning the frequency students enjoy the lessons with the textbooks, 78.3% said they always enjoyed learning in the classroom, while 17.4% said they often enjoyed the learning in the classroom and 4.3% said sometimes they enjoy learning in such classroom.



When students are comfortable learning in the classroom, they usually feel confident to take part in the classroom activities. This can be seen in the findings of the study. 45% of the students said they **always** felt confident to take part in the classroom activities while the remaining 59% said they **often** felt confident taking part in the class activities. 2.8% of the participants stated that they **sometimes** felt confident and 3.2% said they still felt ashamed whenever speaking in class. Some students commented that although some themes are up-to-date, they still did not find them interesting. Hence, they did not have any related background knowledge, they were not comfortable to speak about it. Meanwhile, some others claimed that it was not comfortable to use the "play" or "pause" button with listening recordings, which made them slower to catch the flow of the audio.

In accordance with questionnaire, the data from observation checklist showed students' experiences when using LIFE and SPEAKOUT. The publications come with a multitude of components, including workbooks and CD-ROMs for students' independent use. Some students reported that they found it so convenient when signing in and doing the exercises online, instead of bringing books and CDs with them when doing the homework. Moreover, completing homework task did not mean simply doing extra exercises at home. It is also focalized that how the language was implemented and the way the materials were chosen play a significant role. Several participants told that one strength of LIFE and SPEAKOUT is the extensive use of content from National Geography Channel and BBC. It can be imagined that this is motivating and confidence-boosting for learners and arguably, a lesson built around a clip from a programme might encourage a learner to seek out standardized programmes to watch later or at

least give them a sense of being capable of tracing a text of this nature.



Data analyzed from the open-ended questions show that with the choice of LIFE and SPEAKOUT students are enabled to explore person narrative on life. The students valued the authenticity LIFE and SPEAKOUT priorities and the inclusion of National Geographic Channel as well as BBC content, video podcasts and the life. The language presented in the functional lesson on dealing with misunderstandings was authentic to that context of use. One student shared his experience that in the listening activity where the speakers recount their first experience of falling in love, speakers deliver lines such as “he made me go weak at the knees” and the speech is careful and considered, with no overlapping turns.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The changes that take pace in IR 4.0 really describes the learning preference of UNETI students with LIFE and SPEAKOUT. It is possible for a language course to adapt the changes that are brought by the IR4.0 wave. It is about time for class instructors to consider integrating more current technologies in their teaching methodology, complementing with two different publications mentioned above. Integrating more current technology, utilizing the latest application designed by National

Geographic and Pearson will make the instructors more creative in designing their lesson, thus making the learning process more interesting and motivating the students.

It is reported that those textbooks do an acceptable work in supplying fun and exciting activities for students. Furthermore, more attention is given to design goal-oriented activities. Those activities are in line with the outside world. Those materials offer students opportunities to notice and comprehend input to be eventually acquired during the lesson. Communicative activities are assigned for students to interact, negotiate meaning, self-invest in their learning and produce language in communicative contexts to achieve an outcome. Moreover, they have chances to share the meaning on their own to achieve communicative competence. Furthermore, the activities design could be more intentional in focusing on specific vocabulary and linguistic items.

However, the textbook writers should take it into consideration to reinforce the input across the units through a cyclical format to lead students to check their understanding, create connections, and rethink the forms they are in the process of learning to be incorporated to their language system. Through the process of conducting this research, I developed the analysis based on the questionnaire and observation checklist employed under my own judgement. It could have been appropriate to have judges review the findings obtained. In addition, a greater understanding of the language curriculum design and language learning process in the textbooks could have been provided by studying the collection of LIFE and SPEAKOUT! as a whole. Although this study focused on the conceptions and language learning process used by target learners, future research can be conducted to reveal the conceptions and language learning process used and designed by the textbook writers.



Generally, students enjoyed using LIFE and SPEAKOUT! as the main textbooks. They did not feel threatened in the class hence the active participation throughout the whole learning experience. They also claimed they learned a lot about the course and suggested other courses to be conducted similarly. The only problem faced by the students was the instability of the internet connection in their classroom. Despite having this problem,

students continued taking part actively in the class activities.

In short, teachers and educators should welcome those books in accordance with the new wave of IR4.0 as not only students will benefit from it, language instructors can also have more flexibility in designing their lessons creatively.

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