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THE IMPORTANCE OF USING TEACHING AIDS FOR EDUCATING GEOGRAPHY TEACHER STUDENTS*

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ABSTRACT

To make the lesson more interesting and effective, geography teachers need to fulfil two things: prepare abundant teaching tools with different using aims/purposes for each tool. From the teachers' view, this paper emphasizes the role of the teacher in using collected and created tools. The paper proves that helping student teachers to create their own gadgets in their work afterwards is much more important than just using the collected aids effectively. Making any kinds of teaching tools, from simple aids such as drawings to the technological applicable ones like animated cartoons, the student teachers will have chances to approach and experience creative activities. By this way, the students is actually approaching to the competency-based learning. Besides, to provide understandings and skills of applying a special and important teaching aids, the teacher, is also the paper's concern.

Keywords: geography teaching, teaching aids, student teacher.

TÓM TẮT

Tầm quan trọng trọng của việc sử dụng giáo cụ dạy học trong đào tạo giáo viên Địa lí

Để có những giờ dạy hấp dẫn và hiệu quả, giáo viên địa lí cần làm được hai điều sau: chuẩn bị nhiều dụng cụ dạy học với những mục đích sử dụng khác nhau. Đứng trên quan điểm người dạy, bài báo này nhấn mạnh đến vai trò của giáo viên trong việc sử dụng công cụ dạy học sưu tầm và tự làm. Bài báo chứng minh rằng việc giúp cho sinh viên sư phạm tự tạo ra đồ dùng dạy học quan trọng hơn rất nhiều so với sử dụng hiệu quả đồ dùng dạy học sưu tầm được. Bởi vì, việc tạo ra đồ dùng dạy học chính là phương thức học tập trải nghiệm, tiệm cận đến xu hướng dạy học theo định hướng phát triển năng lực. Ngoài ra, việc xem giáo viên như một công cụ dạy học đặc biệt cũng là điều bài báo quan tâm bàn luận.

Từ khóa: dạy học Địa lí, đồ dùng dạy học, sinh viên sư phạm.

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1. Introduction

To create a good educational atmosphere/ effective learning activities in the class, the teachers need to use different kinds of teaching aids. Teaching aids are tools such as pictures, games, storytelling, etc that are used by teachers to present new language, to stimulate students or to relieve anxiety/ fear/ boredom, to attract attention, etc. Commonly, based on the characteristic of aids, teaching aids are categorized into three groups, including: 1- visual aids such as drawings, pictures, real objects, 2- audio aids such as cassette tapes/ CDs, 3- audio visual aids such as video tapes (Moshen et al, 2015). And, each kind of teaching aid has its own disadvantages and advantages for application in the teaching - learning process.

The significance of teaching and learning through the use of modern teaching aids has the potential to facilitate almost all educational experience, allowing learners to use the new technology and modern aids (Charles et al, 2014). During the teaching process, the teachers themselves need to prepare teaching aids for each lesson, by collecting or creating the tools.

Although, different kinds of teaching aids are available online and offline today, the demand of teachers is not sufficient. In this case, the teacher needs to create the aids in accordance with their teaching purpose in each lesson and prepare for specific usage. Thus, based on the role of teachers in preparation for the lesson, this paper classifies teaching aids into three groups: collected aids, composed aids and one more special aids is the teacher themselves.

The paper will focus on some collected and composed teaching aids that we use for teaching geography. These teaching aids represent the two first categories mentioned above. The composed teaching aids can be prepared in advance by the teacher or can be created by teacher and student during the teaching - learning process. It is especially important to teach and help the students to create their own gadgets (David & Bill, 2005).

To some extent, both the collected and composed teaching aids are valuable to promote the students' activeness and involvement to develop the knowledge and skills at different levels. While using collected aids helps the student actively search for and develop new knowledge and skills; using composed aids helps student use knowledge as materials to apply and create new products or new tools. In addition, one more important teaching aids we want to emphasize here is the teacher themselves. How should we create, use, and help the teacher students to make themselves become good teaching aids is also our great concern.

2. Some kinds of teaching aids

Among the variety of teaching aids (both offline and online) that geography teachers can use, this paper only focuses on some tools below.

Game (online and offline)

Teachers often use different games in geography classes such as bingo, puzzle, counting down, etc that make learning fun for students.

Recently, these games can be used in a more interesting and effective way with the support of technology. The teacher can design and organize the games by using computer, internet, etc. Besides, there are lots of online games that the teacher can use and share with each other in geography classes.

Kahoot is a new and a good example of an online game that can be used for individual and team competition as well. This game is easily applied, even for primary students, and even for teachers who are not necessarily computer literate can still make and organize a Kahoot game in class.

In Vietnam, the biggest limitation to use Kahoot game is the requirement of equipment to organize the game in class, including: the available of internet and smartphone. Because, not all of Vietnamese students have smartphones. Not all school have well run network. So, sometimes, it is not impossible to organize the game for individual. And, it is especially difficult to use Kahoot in rural areas where the internet is not good enough to play the game. I myself experienced this difficulty once when I used Kahoot game in a training course for high school teachers in Gia Lai province, a rural area of Vietnam. The game could not run well.

Cartoon: a drawing shows the features of its subjects in a humorously exaggerated way. Using cartoon in education not only creates interest and attention but also develops critical thinking and reflective teaching skills (Micheal M. van Wyk, 2011).

Cartoon movie: a motion picture using animation techniques to photograph a sequence of drawings rather than real people or objects.

Story and storytelling

In education, storytelling is an old, traditional method. It has been used for so long. In teaching, stories can be selected from a variety of sources and used to match the lesson objectives. According to David & Bill (2005), storytelling produces positive impacts on students such as: 1- increase close interpersonal relationship between students-teachers and students-students, the empathy, enthusiastic, engagement of students, as well as the sense of connectedness in the classroom; 2 - help increasing students' interest, attention in the content of the lesson; 3- create good learning environment; 4- encourage students to continue writing a story or to make their own stories. Stories also can bring learners closer to life - especially true stories come from personal experiences. To have stories come from personal experiences, the teachers need to move to different places to enrich their own experiences. This idea is not only right for health students as David & Bill emphasized but also very important for geography teacher students. That is why, field trip plays a vital role

in teaching and learning geography at all levels. And, it is especially essential and necessary for geography teachers.

Mind map: a graphical way to represent ideas and concepts. It is a visual thinking tool that helps to structure information, to better analyze, comprehend, synthesize, recall and generate new ideas.

Tony Buzan introduced Mind map in 1960, and it has been applied in different fields later on including business, education, health, etc. In education, Mind map (both online and offline) help students to improve memory, creativity, concentration, communicative ability, thinking skills, learning skills, general intelligence and quickness of mind. This is really a unique thinking tool which allows us to accomplish all the goals, make it easy to remember things, think up brilliant ideas, etc. Today, it is easier for us to apply Mind map because there are different Mind map software online such as Concept Draw Mind map, Microsoft Visio, Mind Finder, iMind Map, etc.

Generally, in Vietnam, storytelling, cartoon, cartoon movie, mind map etc, has become more and more familiar with students and geography teachers in recent times. Teaching aids can be a source of knowledge for students, the fundamental components/condition for the teachers to innovate their teaching method. Using teaching aids is a good way to form the geography concepts and symbols, to increase interest and motivation, to increase the active and independent acquisition of students, to enhance the quality and the effect of learning outcomes. Therefore, using different kinds of teaching aids in classroom is also considered to apply the new active teaching techniques. The Four Corner technique is an example.

When applying teaching aids in education settings, the teachers' role is to design, organize, and instruct the students to acquire new knowledge and develop skills by themselves. Following the teachers' instructions, the students need to know how to make self-assessment, and self-adjustment. This is also a good way to improve self-study capacity for the students.

The special teaching aids- The teacher

The teacher is a special teaching aid. Actually, the teacher can be considered as a multifunctional teaching tool. They take different roles in the teaching process (Brown & H. Douglas (2007)). They can be a singer, painter, storyteller, etc. Thus, the following things belong to the teacher can be used as teaching aids, i.e., the movement, the use of body language, eye contact, gestures, facial expression, speech, student talk, names, and attitude, etc.

It seems that, this is more popular/ easier to use body language in teaching foreign languages than any other subjects, like geography. For example, to express the meaning of *happy* or *sad*; to show the instructions for doing something. However, it actually is very important to consider the using of body language in all subjects, especially things like:

making eye contact, facial expression, speech, attitude, characteristic, etc. Even though, sometimes, the personality of the teacher has great impact on the teacher students' attitude in learning and on the job later on.

3. The effectiveness of using teaching aids in geography class

In this part, we mention the effectiveness of using teaching aids, both in terms of the direct and indirect effectiveness on teacher students. We will give examples of collected and composed aids that we used and created in teaching geography. We hope to demonstrate the different effectiveness when the teacher uses collected and created teaching aids. The teaching aids below include three collected and four created ones.

Games (composed)

Kahoot Game (online)

Games online and offline always have great effectiveness in gaining and maintaining attention or interest of students. While offline games give students the big chances to interact with each other; online games help students to improve their technological skills and also save time for creating the games, marking the point by counting down the answer time, ranking the teams or individuals automatically. Kahoot game online is a good example.¹

Surely, using the same content of the test on this Kahoot game, we can organize another offline game in the class such as to match the words with word, the words with the pictures, or pieces of one picture, etc.

Cartoon (collected)

Below is a collected cartoon used to emphasize the consequences of aging populations in developed countries (such as Japan, Germany, Korea, Taiwan, etc). Surely, the cartoons can be easily embedded in to the student's memory, much easier than using words alone. Using the cartoon, students can find out and acquire knowledge about aging society, including the positive and negative impacts.

Application purposes

- 1- Acquire new knowledge
- 2- Develop critical thinking

The students' tasks could be:

- 1- What can you see in the two cartoons? Write down a 200-hundred-word paragraph (personal task).

¹ Since we cannot insert the online games into this paper, we put a link to download the Kahoot game online here: <https://create.kahoot.it/create#/edit/a6c56834-0b49-4651-a947-69fc754a396f/overview>
We can log in and create an account on Kahoot IT website. Then we can connect and share the games with others for directly using in the class.

2- What problems does an aging society face? (group task)

3- Make another cartoon to demonstrate the problems of aging societies or the contrastive between a booming and aging societies. Thinking of all the possibilities (group task).

4-Thinking of other geography contents that can be made into a cartoon and make it if possible (group task).

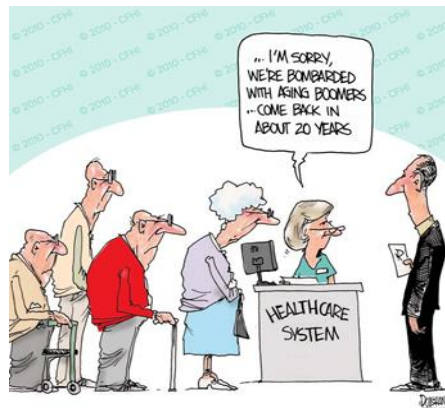


Fig 1. Collected cartoons - Aging population

Finally, the outcomes of question 3 and 4 was much better than I expected. The two cartoons below were created by one student in my class. And, I don't think that I need to explain more about the meaning.



Fig 2. Created cartoons- Solutions for aging population

Follow up questions for two created cartoons should be

1- What can you see in the two cartoons? Present your ideas before class with thin three or five minutes (personal task).

2-What problems may occur in the two circumstances in aging society: giving reward at birth and walking stick to work? (group task).

Story and story-telling*1- Collected story 1 - Finding direction*

The two brothers get lost in a forest, missing the direction at sunset. Before that, it was sunny, but now dark clouds are covering everywhere. They cannot decide which direction the sun is shining from. The two brothers talk to each other:

Elder brother: What should we do now?

Little brother: We must go to the North. We must find out the North direction.

Elder brother: Right, but how do we find out?

Little brother: It's difficult. Just some minutes before, the sun was there. But now dark clouds are in all four directions. And, we do not have a compass.

Elder brother: But, it may still be possible to determine the effect of sunlight.

Little brother: oh, I understand, the warming up is the easiest recognized effect. Right. Let's touch all the things that receive the sunlight to find out the warmer side. The warmer side will be the West direction.

Elder brother: You are very clever, just try.

Little brother: I touched all the flagstones, the tree-trunks and recognize that this is the warm side. So, it is the west direction.

Elder brother: And, where is the north direction?

Little brother: if the west is in front of us, the north direction is in the right. Let's go this way.

Students' tasks are

- 1- If this situation happens in a class, what are the roles of the two brothers?
- 2- What knowledge and skills does the little brother acquire?
- 3- What kind of ability can the little brother improve?

1-Collected story 2- Ancestor of the Japanese

An anthropologist went around the world to find out about the Japanese ancestry for years, but he could not find the result. Finally, he came to the Centre of Vietnam. In Hue station, he accidentally heard two local residents talking to each other (in dialect):

Dialect in Vietnamese	Meaning
- Mi đi ga ni?	You go from this station?
- Ủ, tau đi ga ni. Mi đi ga mô?	Yes, I do. And you?
- Ga tê. Tau đi ga tê.	That station. I go that station.
- Ga tê ga chi?	Which is that station?

- Ga Lãng Cô tề.	It is Lang Co station.
- Răng đông như ri?	Why is so crowded?
- Ri mà đông chi!	Is it crowded?
- Mi ra ga mô?	Which station will you come to?
- Ra ga Nam Ô.	Nam O station
- Khi mô mi đi?	When do you go?
- Chừ chứ khi mô.	Right now
- Mi lo đi đi.	Ok, please go
- Ủ, tau đi nghe mi!	Ok, I go

Recognize that the pronunciation of the local people is similar to Japanese language, the anthropologist shouted happily:

- Oh! The ancestry of the Japanese people comes from this place.

This is a humorous story. But, it demonstrates the fact that even using the same language, dialect is actually a problem that we often master in a specific local region. In the Centre of Vietnam, each province has its own dialect that Vietnamese people from other places also cannot fully understand. This definitely happens not only in Vietnam.

Story (composed by teacher students)

The students' tasks are:

- 1-Make short stories that bring any geographical content of Russia to others.
- 2-Explain the expected outcomes and purposes of using the stories.

And, below is one of the good stories. This story is especially useful for teaching the high school students about Geography of Russia.

“The farmer and the dog”

There was a story. When the Siberia Railway opened for public use in the Soviet Union, people from Eastern eagerly to visit the cities in Western part of the countries, for example Moscow capital. A farmer brought a little dog with him. When getting on the train, the railway staff asked him to put the little dog in the animal carriage. Then, when the train reached to Moscow station, the farmer came to receive his dog. He was so surprised and did not accept the dog.

- It is not my dog, he said angrily.

Calmly, the railway man explained:

- Actually, it is your dog, after a long journey, it has become a big one like this.

Application purposes

- 1- Warming up the lesson, creating interest, motivating the students for study.

2- Acquire new understandings.

3- Develop critical thinking

Suggested questions, such as:

1- What can we see/ understand from the story?

2-How can the small dog become a big one just after a trip?

3- Can the small dog become a big one like this in the present time?

Expected outcomes

- The Soviet Union is very big
- The Soviet Union spreads through many meridians, from West to East.
- The Railway industry of Soviet Union that time was technologically backward, using steam trains, moving slowly... Even, due to heavy snow, the train was stuck in the forest sometimes. Today, by using diesel trains or bullet trains; geographical distance will not be such an obstacle any more.

Mind map (created)

Based on the content of the lesson entitled *Southeast Asian region*, students join in a competition with three tasks below:

1-Making a mind map (groups' task, 4 to 5 groups).

2-Explain what you know about the other groups' mind map (groups' task).

3-Evaluate and make a ranking list of all the mind map in the class (individual tasks).

The expected outcomes are

1- Students can define the differences of natural geographical and social- economic features of two parts in the Southeast Asia region, that is:

- Maritime Southeast Asia region
- Mainland Southeast Asia region

These are the two mind maps created by the students in my class

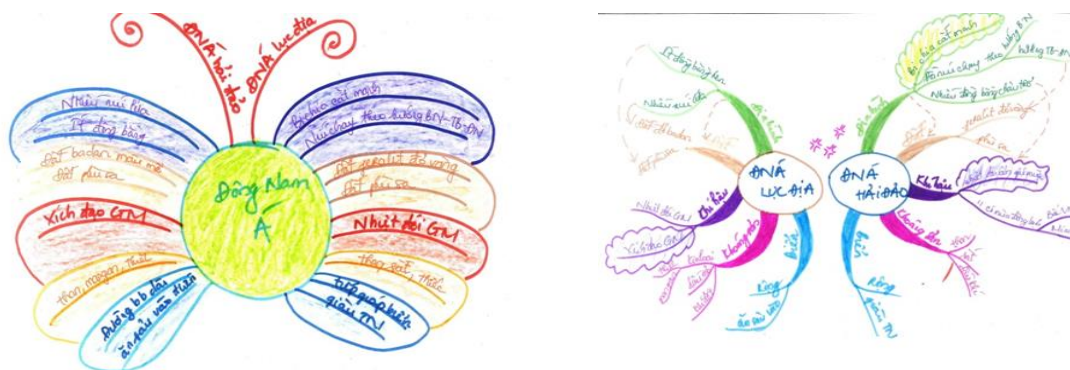


Fig 3. Mind map on Asian region

4. Discussion

We have two discussion points here. *The first one* is the meaning and effectiveness of using teaching tools in geography classes. There is no need to argue about the necessity of using teaching aids in education. However, it is necessary to define the effectiveness of using the collected and composed tools, especially in pedagogical classes. The three important levels that should be considered are: *discovery*, *creation*, and *inspiration*.

While using collected teaching aids help student to *discover* new knowledge and develop new skills; using composed gadgets promote student to *create* new knowledge by themselves.

Creation is the worthiest word to pursue in education. Actually, composing aids is a good way to approach competency based learning, to encourage teacher students involved in creative experiential activities. For example, firstly, I used some stories (both collected and composed) in my lecture. Then, I gave the students some and instructed them how to use these stories in geography class. Finally, I asked them to select a specific content on the geography textbook and create their own stories. The steps is similar with other kinds of teaching aids, including cartoon, cartoon movie, game, mind map, etc. So, some students wrote stories, some made cartoon, others produced movie, and so on. Thus, the significance of using modern technological teaching aids is not only appeal learners to use new aids and enhance the learning outcomes as Charles et al (2014) claimed (p.67); but, that is, the learners' creating capacity.

Creation and the desire to create new things is the most important attainment to help the teacher students themselves to develop into a good teaching aid. In higher level, when a teacher becomes a real teaching aid, he becomes a model; and he can give the students his *inspiration*. The students will take after him to make themselves become good teaching aids, too. That is the best achievement or outcomes in education.

Our paper supports the viewpoint of David & Bill (2005) that is: it is especially important to teach and help the students to create their own gadgets. To do this, the students can not only sit and listen. They need chances to practice what they have learnt from the teacher, other or self-study. They need to actively participate in the activities. For, they will acquire and remember 90% what they learn by doing. Therefore, encouragement and orientation is the teacher's important job.

The second point is about using the special teaching aids, the teacher, which is very important in educating teacher students. This teaching aid is very special because no one can use this aid except the teacher themselves. However, the teachers can improve the aid and enhance their ability in using this aid more and more effectively. We completely agree with Gulam et al's recommendation (2015), that is: "The personality of a teacher is a symbol for his students so the teachers may be tackled the students carefully and wisely"(p.233).

Basically, in Vietnam, considering teachers are one kind of teaching aid is not formally emphasized and accepted in the curricular of pedagogical universities/colleges. Actually, we should also mention the attitude, manner, and behavior of teachers; some teaching techniques of teachers in class such as using body language, facial expression, gestures, making eye contact, speech, intonation, attitude etc. However, these things only appear in the module *Pedagogical practices*. The teacher is not mentioned and emphasized as a teaching tool in the module: *Using teaching aids*. No geography education department in Vietnam emphasizes this point in the curricular.

Culturally speaking, Vietnamese people often place the teacher in the highest position in class. It is not acceptable to respect the teacher as a teaching tool. Even though, there is no Vietnamese research paper that mentions this. So, we need to change our thinking, and help the student teachers to understand, to develop, and use this special aid effectively. For that purpose, more research focusing on the topic needs to be done in the future.

5. Conclusion

Teaching aids play a very important role in teaching. Thus, to attain a good teaching career, it is the teachers' task to collect and to compose a rich source of teaching aids for themselves.

Collected teaching aids are essential for teachers to make interesting lessons and create effective learning outcomes. Composed teaching aids are much better to involve teacher students in learning process actively and unintentionally. More importantly, giving student teachers the opportunities and experiences to make teaching tools not only help them to enrich their knowledge and skills but also cultivate the ability to create more gadgets in their teaching career later on.

Besides, considering the teachers themselves as teaching aids is very important to enhance the students to acquire knowledge and skills; especially, to *inspire* students to be good teaching aids in the future.

However, in order to spread the inspiration to students, the teacher need to devote their time, heart and mind in teaching career; to improve their teaching methods, renovate teaching aids uninterruptedly. Besides, accepting the viewpoint, that is, the teacher as teaching aid, the Vietnamese gradually need to change their mind on the position of the teacher.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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